

NOMA
THE
ARTS
OF
JAPAN

THE ARTS OF JAPAN ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL

VOL. I

by NOMA SEIROKU

translated and adapted by JOHN ROSENFELD

ANCIENT
AND
MEDIEVAL
VOL. I



"Ideally, a person should visit the monuments of Japan and explore them slowly and carefully. Not everyone can do this, obviously, and the author would be pleased if his book, through words and pictures, can recreate something of the experience of actually searching out the arts of Japan in their own physical setting."

This is the only richly illustrated presentation of the arts of Japan in terms of the spirit of the time and place in which they were produced. In this first volume, over five millenia of cultural treasures of ancient Japan up to the year 1572, plus the magnificent temples, shrines and countryside of which they are a part, are reproduced in superb photographs, in both color and gravure.

The text, captions and supplementary notes relate the evolution of Japanese art to the conditions which fostered the various schools and styles, and reflect Dr. Noma Seiroku's strong personal approach to art history. The author has selected objects—including sculpture, painting, ceramics, architecture, lacquer and costume—that evoke the esthetic, spiritual, and social ideals of their original settings.

As a translator, John Rosenfield has preserved the "gracious and non-technical way of expression" of the original; as an adaptor, he has contributed from his own vast knowledge to expand and clarify matters and areas of importance to the Western reader.

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On the jacket is depicted a statue of the Buddhist deity Ashura. An excellent example of the dry lacquer technique, it was ordered in A. D. 734 by the Empress Kōmyō.

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THE ARTS OF JAPAN



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ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL

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by
NOMA SEIROKU

translated and adapted by
JOHN ROSENFELD

photographs by
TAKAHASHI BIN



講談社

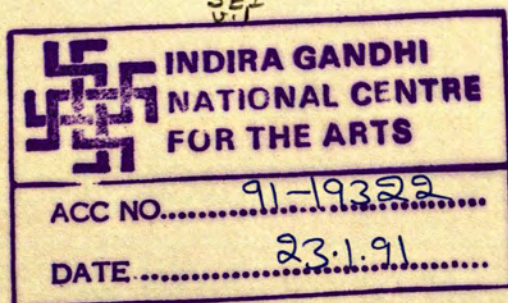
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DISTRIBUTORS:

United States: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.
10 East 53rd Street, New York, New York 10022

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Central and South America: Feffer & Simons Inc.
31 Union Square, New York, New York 10003

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306 Silom Road, Bangkok

Hong Kong and Singapore: Books for Asia Ltd.
30 Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon; 65 Crescent Road, Singapore 15

The Far East: Japan Publications Trading Company
P.O. Box 5030, Tokyo International

Published by Kodansha International Ltd., 2-12-21 Otowa,
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112 and Kodansha International/USA, Ltd.,
10 East 53rd Street, New York, New York 10022 and 44 Mont-
gomery Street, San Francisco, California 94104. Copyright © in
Japan 1966 by Kodansha International Ltd. All rights reserved.
Printed in Japan.

LCC 65-19186
ISBN 0-87011-018-7
JBC 1070-780173-2361

First edition, 1966
Sixth printing, 1975



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Translator's Preface

■ This book by Noma Seiroku is one of the rare studies in the history of Oriental art which treat many forms of expression together in terms of the qualities which they have in common, the unifying spirit of the environment and time for which they were made. Most of the visual arts are discussed here—sculpture, painting, ceramics, costumes—yet the author has been highly selective, exploring just those works which seem to evoke the esthetic, spiritual, and even social ideals of their original setting.

Mr. Noma's prose style is extremely attractive and conveys a great deal in poetic terms which cannot be rendered literally into English. My pleasant if challenging task has been to try to capture the flavor of his insights and preserve his gracious, non-technical way of expression. This has been complicated by the fact that Mr. Noma has referred to historical or religious matters which are familiar to his original Japanese audience but not to foreigners—the Dōkyō affair, the Gempei war, the deity Fudō Myō-ō. Although frequently discussed with only a word or brief phrase, these are important to his historical concepts, and I have had to expand and clarify them while still trying to keep the technical detail to a minimum. Unavoidably, I have had to make many small alterations and insertions, but have done so with the sole intention of adapting the book for non-Japanese readers. I have attempted to amplify the author's ideas, not to censor or change them.

Another problem is the matter of Buddhist terminology. Some names are more familiar to the Western reader in their Indian form, others by their Japanese names. With this in mind, I have not tried for uniformity of usage, but rather to find a reasonable balance; however, an explanatory phrase is frequently added, or else the name in the alternate form is given in parentheses. These terms are also included in a general glossary which lists historical, religious, and technical words which may be unfamiliar to the Western reader.

The book is divided roughly as follows. The text in ten chapters outlines the unifying esthetic, religious, and historical factors of a given epoch or region. The captions help define the esthetic tone of the works illustrated and indicate major points of interest. The Notes at the rear fill out the explanations of religious iconography, factual history, or details of craftsmanship. Mr. Noma has dealt with topics about which Japanese scholars occasionally disagree—the dating, for example, of two bronze statues at Hōryū-ji attributed to the sculptor Tori Busshi, or the degree of influence exerted on the arts of the eleventh century by the Buddhist notion of the End of the Law (the idea that mankind was entering into an era of weakened virtue). To preserve the flow of his narrative, Mr. Noma has presented his own views without introducing scholarly disputes of a highly technical nature. Unsolved problems lurk in every field of art history, and Japan is no exception. Mr. Noma's views differ occasionally from those of some of his colleagues, but other distinguished scholars share his opinions, which are the result of decades of thoughtful writing and research.

NOTE TO READERS: By noting the last syllable of the name of a particular Buddhist structure, an indication of the structure's general nature can be gained. Here are some of the most common name endings.

-ji, -tera, -dera: variant readings of the same Chinese character meaning "temple" (e.g., Tōdai-ji, Asuka-dera).

-in: often used to denote a subordinate part of a large temple (e.g., the *tō-in*, or "east precinct," of Hōryū-ji; or the Daisen-in, a small sub-temple within the compound of Daitoku-ji, Kyoto).

-dō: a temple building with a specific function (e.g., *kōdō*, a "lecture hall" for the ceremonial reading of texts or sermons).

-den, -dono: alternate readings of the same character used as an especially honorific reference to either a religious or secular building (e.g., the Shishin-den of the Imperial Palace in Kyoto).



Preface

■ Japan was once joined to the mainland of Asia; numerous fossil remains bear testimony to this. Even after the separation, seeds of trees from as far away as the Indies would be washed ashore by the Black Current, take root, and flourish; migratory birds would fly in from the mainland. Japan has never existed completely apart from the continent, nor has her culture ever been totally isolated. Her ancient artifacts bear traces of influences from Greece, Iran, and India, and all parts of East Asia, as they were channeled through the Korean Peninsula and China. The Japanese, however, have never been content with merely copying—this is universally recognized today—but have made of these influences something new in keeping with their own needs and traditions. This is due, of course, to a strong national character, but what is called a national character is the product of a country's climate and soil and the traditions which are preserved there. With flowers, a seed might flourish in one plot of soil, but in another it would wither and die, and it is the same with the arts. The soil of Japan has been uniquely hospitable to artistic impulses.

Most studies of Japanese art today emphasize the evolution of style from period to period to the neglect of the environmental factors—the land, the people, and their changing ideals. To speak of the arts without considering these, as if artists worked in some ideal and disembodied realm, is to fail to grasp vital realities which have molded esthetic forms. The arts of Japan flourished primarily in four major centers: first the Asuka district, then Nara, Kyoto, and, last of all, Tokyo. Why were these the centers of production? Why were the centers moved? How did the changes in locale affect the arts? How were styles transmitted from the major centers to smaller, provincial ones? These are problems which should be considered together with other aspects of the background—social, religious, and philosophical. This book is organized according to the chronological evolution of Japanese art, but as much as possible, it attempts to analyze the local circumstances which fostered the various schools and styles. A flower placed in a vase has beauty, to be sure, but this is because we feel in it the living beauty of those blossoming in the fields. Ideally, a person should visit the monuments of Japan and explore them slowly and carefully. Not everyone can do this, obviously, and the author would be pleased if his book, through words and photographs, can recreate something of the experience of actually searching out the arts of Japan in their own physical setting.

Who has not been struck by the fact that the world is becoming ever narrower and that a uniform culture has begun to spread everywhere, supplanting the distinctive traditions of districts and whole nations? Men have tired of its monotony, and warning voices have been raised against it. For, just as we expect a person to demonstrate his own individuality, so each region should be able to express its own distinctive character. The world will have regained its breadth when once again the flowers of each region bloom in a wild profusion of colors. Japan herself had developed a culture enriched with the special art forms of various localities, but these places are being overwhelmed by the culture patterns transplanted from the great commercial and industrial centers; they are losing the power to generate their own arts and crafts. When individuals can express themselves effectively through the arts, the creativity of the collective culture is strengthened. When rooted in the ability of the small regions to produce a living culture, the artistic life of the capital and the entire nation flourishes all the more.

In exploring such ideas, this study occasionally neglects objects which are typical of one or another chronological period in order to emphasize environmental factors. The environment—its economic, political and spiritual aspects, the structure of patronage, the support, training, inspiration, use, criticism, and protection of the arts—must be firm and solid before the arts can flourish. A flower whose roots are shallow will not bloom for long. It is man himself who provides the bases of creativity; but there is a certain ineluctable force, like that of nature itself, which repeatedly thwarts his efforts. One of the basic processes of civilization is to oppose this baleful destiny, to marshal the forces of human ingenuity and ethnic character, and to construct from its foundations a society in which the arts will continue to nourish the human spirit.

I. From Forest to Village Life

■ **HANDICRAFTS IN THE AGE OF HUNTING.** In order to see the arts of Japan in proper perspective, we should trace them back as far as possible toward the time of their germination. The oldest distinctive body of material is the pottery called Jōmon ware, and some of the objects associated with it are said to be as much as nine thousand years old on the basis of the measurement of the radio-activity of carbon—the so-called carbon 14 tests. While the reliability of these estimates is open to question, it would still be safe to say that Jōmon ware was produced continuously for several thousand years until the beginning of the Christian era. It is called Jōmon, or “rope-pattern,” because at the time of its manufacture ropes were often pressed against the damp clay surface, leaving impressions of strands and knots. Objects bearing this simple, direct kind of decoration have been found in virtually all parts of Japan—from Hokkaidō in the north to Kyūshū in the south. That similar objects have been found neither in Korea nor elsewhere on the continent of Asia is a factor of marked significance.

The period of Japan’s history in which this ware was used has been named the Jōmon period. For most of this time, agriculture was as yet unknown, and human livelihood was based primarily on the hunting of animals and the gathering of wild fruits and grains. During so long an era, it was natural that variations in the pottery forms would have developed, and on the basis of these, scholars have divided the Jōmon period into early, middle, late, and latest phases. The pottery of the early period has a slight amount of decoration, but on that of the middle period, the ornament is free and bold—more extravagantly so than any other ware of the ancient world. The find spots of this particular type of Jōmon pottery are limited to the mountainous area of central Honshū—mainly Nagano and Yamanashi prefectures. It is surprising that such remarkable work was produced in an isolated region far from seacoasts and foreign contacts; but on further consideration, the mountainous interior was relatively free from the danger of attack and was blessed with free-flowing streams and abundant fish, game, and fruit. For most of the year it must have been a veritable garden, but the cold of the winter season is so severe that in ancient times mere survival must have demanded an indomitable spirit. Moreover, to relieve the monotony of life during the long winters, families dwelling in their primitive houses must have felt the need of ornament on their everyday utensils. Struggling with an environment which was at times benevolent and at times cruel and severe, these people developed religious beliefs, however primitive, and they may well have imbued their pottery decor with animistic or magical significance.

From the beginning, Jōmon style vessels were used for cooking, chiefly boiling; and in the early period, their bottoms were pointed so that a pot might be stood between rocks in the center of the hearth. In the middle period, the pots were used for food storage as well as cooking; their bottoms were flat and the vessels stood upright by themselves. On the pottery with a pointed end, the ornament was relatively flat and modest, whereas when vessels were made so that they would not rest on their sides, it became possible to carve extremely bold and deeply modeled decor. For containers used to hold especially valued foods, it was likely that they would be given more elaborate ornament, the motifs having animistic overtones which insured that the contents would not spoil or that tomorrow’s food would be equally abundant. For most of the Jōmon era, people did not form towns or even villages, but rather lived in small, isolated family units. The pottery must have been made not by specialists but by individuals who imparted great originality and variety to this ware and who seem to have taken great delight in the creative process itself, even as they remained in awe of the supernatural forces they invoked with their designs. These anonymous craftsmen did not strive for mechanical regularity in their vessels; they preferred asymmetric patterns with vortex-like, swirling qualities. For tens of centuries, this style continued unabated due perhaps to the sense of vitality, to the suggestions of growth and increase which its decorations conveyed. However, in the development of Jōmon ware from the late to the latest phases, the older tradition died out, and the clay surfaces became smooth and regular; only curvilinear patterns remained, but these became formalized and lost that sense of harmonious, organic relationship between surface ornament and the body of a vessel which had prevailed in the middle period. Meticulous craftsmanship replaced the bold, unrestrained manner, and thus the primeval spirit diminished as more stable village groups were formed and life took on a greater security.

Small, charming idols which are called *dogū* (“clay figures”) were produced during the middle period, and they have much in common with the boldly ornamented pottery vessels. Resembling human beings and also squirrels, rabbits, and cats, they are radically deformed as a rule and must have been given symbolic significance; their exact purpose and use, however, is still unknown. It is sometimes assumed that they were used in very primitive religious rituals, perhaps to ensure fertility or to

exorcise evil forces; and forms similar to the figurines occasionally appear on the handles and other parts of pottery vessels, suggesting that they added their significance to that of the rest of the decor. Like the pottery of the middle period, they are richly inventive in shape, but those of late and latest periods are more uniform, the most characteristic examples being female figures with wide shoulders, their legs spread apart—fertility fetishes, perhaps.

At the dawn of human civilization, Japan was far removed from cultural developments elsewhere in the world, and yet she produced in abundant quantity esthetic objects of haunting, memorable beauty. Long before the influence of continental civilizations reached her, the visual arts had begun to play a meaningful role in the daily life of her people. If this was the dawn of Japanese art, it was certainly not graced with ease and tranquility, but rather was part of a stern confrontation with nature. Perhaps for this reason alone, the arts so engendered were hardy and enduring.

■ **AGRICULTURE AND THE ARTS.** For thousands of years the livelihood of the people of Japan was based on hunting and the gathering of fruits; the storage of food was their only means of fending off starvation. It was not until the second and third centuries B.C. that the Japanese came to know of agricultural life on a planned, systematic basis. Along with the techniques of casting bronze and iron, this new way of life was transmitted from the Asian continent, coming first to Kyūshū and then gradually spreading as far east as the Chūbu region; that is, Shizuoka, Aichi, Gifu, Nagano, Yamanashi, and Niigata. The development of agriculture brought profound changes to the nature of Japanese society. Stable supplies of food could be guaranteed; the titles to plots of land were fixed; villages were formed, and then larger political units were established. A new religion developed, centered on the rhythmic cycles of planting and harvesting, one in which ceremonials played an important role—in contrast to the more primitive beliefs of the age of hunting.

As though in reflection of these fundamental changes in society, an entirely new type of ceramic ware was developed, called Yayoi ware. The name could not be more appropriate, for, taken from that of the district near Tokyo where this pottery was first found, Yayoi is an ancient word for the third month of the year and has connotations of springtime and youth. This ware is functionally simple, refined in shape, orderly and regular—in contrast to the complex and exuberant Jōmon style. It was developed in Kyūshū, where influences from the mainland had so changed the local Jōmon style that an entirely new type of pottery was produced. Despite the foreign influences, however, shapes like this have not been found on the continent, and Yayoi ware demonstrates once again the strong individuality of Japanese taste.

Having received the techniques of metal craft as well, Japan entered the first stages of advanced civilization during the Yayoi period. In those parts of the world where metalworking was originally discovered, a lengthy bronze age was, as a rule, followed by an iron age; but in Japan, bronze and iron appeared at virtually the same time, and there are even indications that some iron implements were introduced earlier than bronze ones. The use of metal tools must have greatly stimulated other crafts, such as woodworking and gem making, but apart from the Yayoi vessels, the chief artistic remains of this period are its bronze weapons—swords and halberds—and bronze bell-shaped objects called *dōtaku*. The weapons are found most abundantly in northern Kyūshū. Their shapes are those of regular military weapons, but the objects themselves are so flat and thin that they must have been made for symbolic use rather than for actual combat. The *dōtaku* come chiefly from the plains around Osaka, Kyoto, and Nara (the Kinki district), and though these seem to have been made in emulation of musical bells of the continent, they too must have lost their utilitarian function. The fact that bronze implements with no practical use should have been distributed over so wide an area during this period may be explained, perhaps, by the idea that they were worshiped or treasured in their own right. Metal implements were extremely useful in everyday life, but those made of iron were subject to rust, and as a result, few have been discovered intact. Beyond utility, however, the material was rare and must have been highly treasured—especially bronze. At the dawn of the metal age, people may have been satisfied simply to own metal implements as symbols of status rather than, in all cases, to use them. Families must have competed with each other in collecting them, but the degree to which any one given object was a symbol of power and wealth is not clear today. The swords and halberds were very skillfully cast and their shapes given refined subtleties of design. The same is true of the *dōtaku*, which have a great variety of patterns on their surfaces—saw-tooth motifs, spirals, flowing-water shapes, and the like. Clarity and refinement of form replaced the contorted quality of Jōmon arts; and on a few rare *dōtaku*, scenes of daily life appear. These pictures are simple things, to be sure, but one can still feel the strong urge to escape from the ambiguities and emotionalism of the Jōmon period into a life of greater sophistication and refinement.

During this period, skillfully wrought jewels came into use as personal ornaments. The discovery in the earth of gem stones, such as hard jasper or agate, and working them into ornaments must have been a source of great satisfaction, for neither the gems nor the symbolic bronzes were directly essential to livelihood. Their production in great quantity shows that the standard of living in Japan had risen far above the level of mere subsistence.

■ **THE PERIOD OF THE ANCIENT TOMBS.** As agriculture advanced and villages became larger and more complex, local chieftains came into being, dominated by powerful, landholding families. Soon some-

thing like small, regional states developed, and the process continued until a national entity was established—that is, a concept of nationhood and of a supreme ruler, even though his authority was limited to the central and western part of Honshū and Kyūshū.

Chieftains and rulers in the late third century A.D. began to build large mound-like tombs which, because of their scale, demonstrated the authority and prestige which they had attained on earth. Now called *kofun* (or ancient tombs), these mounds at first were adaptations of natural formations of the ground; inside the burial chamber were placed swords, the ruler's state seal, objects used in the burial ceremony, and mirrors which served as magical protection. As the clans became more powerful, the tumuli became larger and larger, and by the fifth century, immense artificial burial mounds were constructed, often surrounded by water, like a moat. While serving as the last resting place of a mighty man, they became after his death an even more ostentatious display of his might and authority, and the most dramatic examples are the grave mounds near Osaka of two emperors under whose reign great steps were taken in the unification of the nation: Ōjin and his successor Nintoku. These two sites mark the climax of grave building, and thereafter, the graves became smaller and less ambitious. The social order and the structure of political power had become more stabilized; the position of the Emperor established, and it was no longer necessary to make such demonstrations of power. On the other hand, the number of objects buried with the dead continued to increase out of the belief, influenced perhaps by Chinese ideas, in a life of the spirit after death. With the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century, however, the Indian custom of cremation was adopted, removing the need for an elaborate tomb to house the corpse. The Buddhists also believed in rituals and prayers which encouraged the rebirth of souls in Paradise, and for these reasons, the old funeral practices rapidly waned. It is the attainment of Japanese culture just before the introduction of Buddhism that is so well represented by the *kofun*, by the grave implements, and by the striking clay figurines (*haniwa*) which were added to them.

Various theories have been offered concerning the origins of the *haniwa*, but the one most generally accepted is that they were made for the consolation of the dead. But no matter how serious their religious value may have been, the *haniwa* have an air of lightness and freedom about them, and the craftsmen who made them in such large numbers seem to have felt no inhibitions about introducing playful elements as they built up the clay forms. The chief limitation which the potters did recognize was the necessity of making these large figures hollow so as not to crack when fired in the kiln. This did not diminish in any way, however, the archaic boldness and frankness of these pieces. Had they been made with greater detail, they might have told more about the manners and customs of the time; as it is, their vigorous simplicity has preserved strong emotional qualities, even if the emotion is sometimes nothing more than the sheer delight the potters took in the inventions of their craft.

The most elaborate development of the *haniwa* took place in the Kantō district, the great plain around Tokyo. This was far from the main centers of culture of the time, but the hardy and unsophisticated spirit of the people in that eastern region found a most congenial outlet in the *haniwa*. On the other hand, the figurines are rarely found in northern Kyūshū, but the same motifs appear in painted form on the walls of old tombs there. Ancient paintings are found only in this region, which is closest to the mainland, and they were probably inspired by Chinese and Korean grave customs.

One must not imagine that the utter simplicity of the *haniwa* or the wall paintings are characteristic of the entire culture and technology of the time. Highly developed casting techniques and designs can be seen on mirrors and military equipment recovered from the tombs. Moreover, while it must be true that metal objects coming from the continent were highly prized, implements made in Japan show a decided independence of form. A notable example is the type of design called *chokkomon* found on mirror backs, a sinuous pattern of arc and fret shapes devised apparently by craftsmen in the area around the modern Osaka, Kyoto, and Nara. Found also near Nara is a celebrated mirror with representations of four different building types, all indigenous in style. These demonstrate the manner by which the Japanese, not entirely satisfied with imported objects, produced their own innovations, an independence of spirit reflected also by the military expeditions that they launched onto the Korean peninsula during this period. A warrior's helmet has been excavated having gilt copper bands on which charming representations of birds and animals are made with tiny, engraved circles; these have much the same boldness and spontaneity of form as the *haniwa*.

It is extraordinary that the shapes of houses would have been used to ornament a mirror, but two of these very building types are still to be seen in Shinto sanctuaries at Izumo and Ise, the most ancient and revered of the national shrines. At both places the archaic building types have been preserved on a giant scale and with clarity and orderliness which reveal a distinctly Japanese attitude toward ancient canons of beauty. Forms retained for fifteen hundred years have naturally been refined and simplified, but the results are still much in the spirit of the *chokkomon* designs. This ancient, national tradition has been neither destroyed nor greatly distorted, even in such times as the Nara period when Japan was overwhelmed by the culture of T'ang China. And at Ise today as in the past, a ceremony is performed each dawn and sunset, offering to the shrine deities a share of the bountiful foods of the sea and mountains—a ritual as archaic in spirit as the buildings around it. With enthusiasm Japan has welcomed and absorbed cultural elements from abroad, but she has also had the strong determination to guard her indigenous customs. These two traits have played a fundamental role in the evolution of her culture and arts.



1. VIEW OF SHINANO DISTRICT

High in the mountains of central Honshū, this is one of the districts where the craft of pottery in neolithic times flourished most strongly. It is a land of abundant food and refreshing beauty, protected by its mountains and watered by the highland streams. The winters at this altitude are severely cold, however, and in many parts, the natural setting is as unspoiled today as it must have been in the remote past.

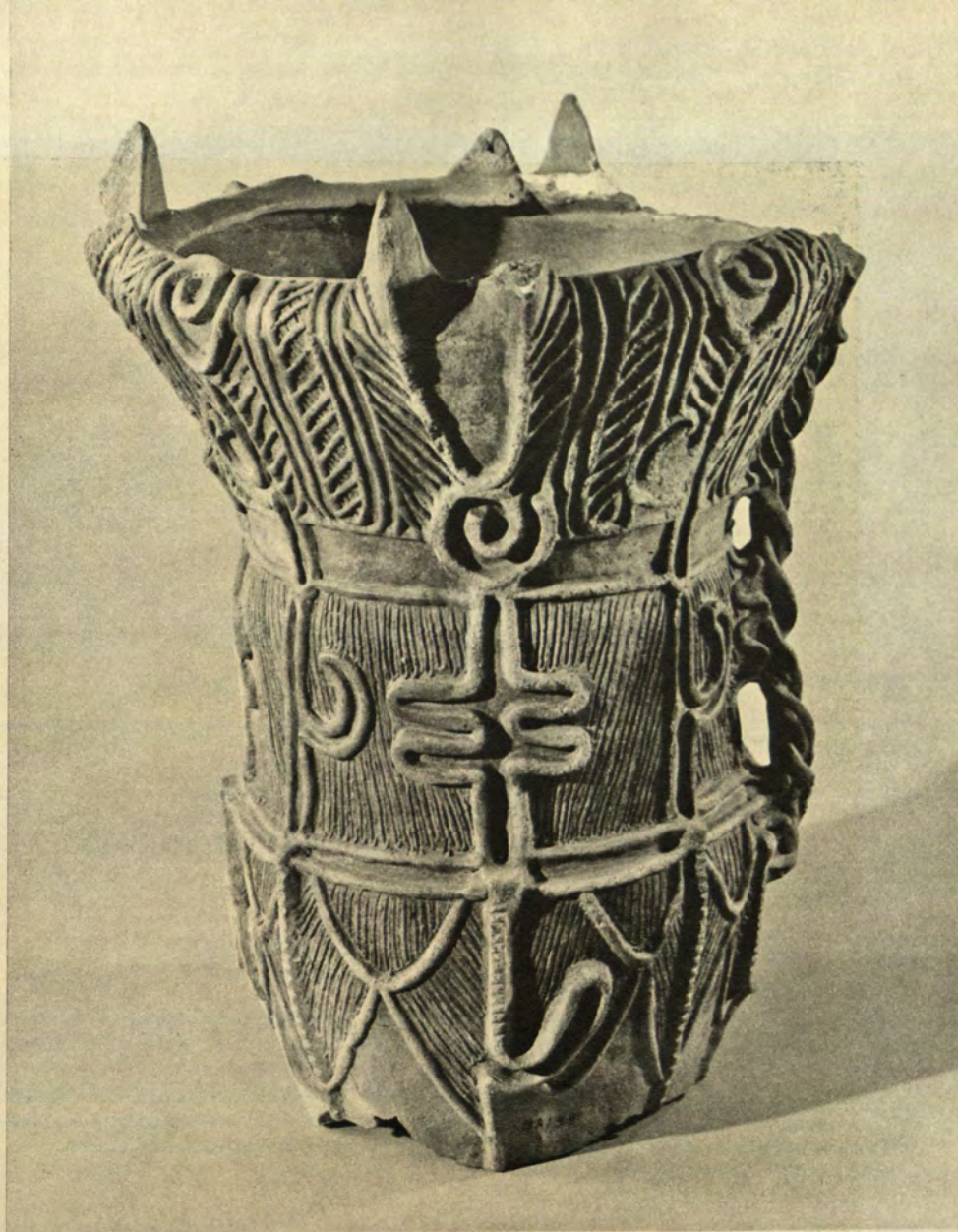


2. MIDDLE JŌMON WARE • Height: 36 cm. (14 in.)

This seems to have been made as a lamp, but its actual use is not clear. Its structure, drastically bold in concept, may have been suggested by the shapes of fire or of a whirlpool. This evocative object is part sculpture and part utensil; it is a token of man's fundamental urge to creativity even in his primeval stage of life.

3. MIDDLE JŌMON WARE • Height: 36 cm. (14.1 in.)

The surface of this storage jar is encrusted with strips of clay and incised lines in bold, arbitrary patterns not unlike those a child might make with crayons. Amid this exuberance, however, is a search for system and order that demonstrates the elemental esthetic needs of man at the very beginning of his artistic traditions.



4. EARTHENWARE • Late Yayoi period • 38 cm. (14.8 in.)

In the age of bronze and iron, Japanese pottery lost much of the exaggerated surface modeling of the Jōmon wares. Instead, the beauty of such wheel-made and symmetrical vessels lies in the refinement of shape and the sense of unity between the incised surface designs and the vessel itself. Only the small clay pellets around the neck and the impression of ropes in the decorative bands remain as relics of the techniques of the Jōmon tradition.

5. CLAY FIGURINE (*DOGŪ*) • *Jōmon* period • Height: 36.5 cm. (14.3 in.)

Whether this is a male or female is not clear, but the fierce, wrinkled face and long neck impart a sense of bizarre energy. The face is an applied disc shape with schematic incisions; the short arms appear unnatural. This small idol, amazingly subtle in form, is a work of compelling power.

6. POTTERY FIGURINE (*DOGŪ*) • *Jōmon* period • Height: 20.2 cm. (7.9 in.)

Perhaps an amulet for securing easy childbirth, this strange figure combines a sense of fanciful mystery with that of doll-like charm. Deft incisions with a spatula depict the hair and clothing; ropes were impressed against the legs, and the surface was originally painted red.



7. CLAY FIGURINE (*DOGŪ*) • *Jōmon* period • Height: 26.2 cm. (10.2 in.)

This figurine, finely wrought, is one of a large number of stereotyped female images which come from the northeast side of the main island of Honshū. They have very distinctive qualities, such as the rudimentary arms and legs, enlarged eyes which seem to be spectacles or goggles, and thick clothing which is decorated with recessed patterns of curved lines.





8. DŌTAKU • Middle Yayoi period • Height of bell in center: 47.5 cm. (18.7 in.); right: 64 cm. (25.1 in.)

When metal culture was transmitted from the continent, the Japanese must have treated bronze implements as precious treasure and used them in rituals. Bell-shaped objects of this type may even have served as emblems of power and wealth. The arrival of the new technology brought forth great changes in the artistic sensibilities of the Japanese.

9. MALE AND FEMALE HANIWA FIGURES • Sixth century
• Height: left figure 57 cm. (22.4 in.); right figure 64 cm. (25.1 in.)

Large, hollow clay figurines were placed around the grave mounds of persons of power and high status; even so, they possess a spirit of utmost simplicity and naive charm. In this pair of dancers, the noses are long wedge shapes; simple holes form the eyes and mouths; the heads and torsos are joined as a single cylindrical shape. For all their simplicity, however, human qualities are expressed with great boldness and sophistication.







11. SEATED FEMALE FIGURE, *HANIWA* • Sixth century • Height: 68.5 cm. (26.9 in.)

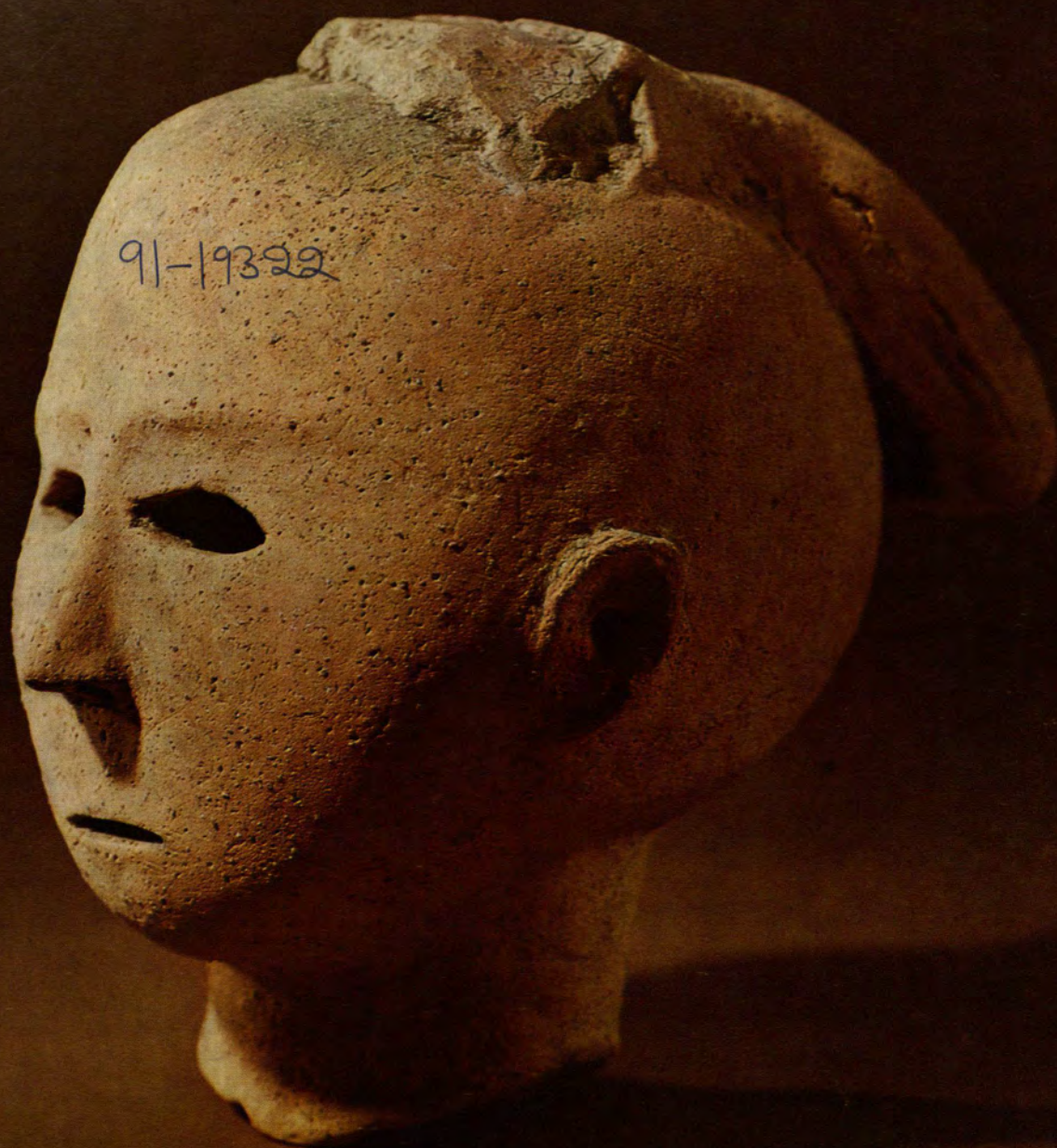
This may be a representation of a type of woman thought to have had a role in funeral ceremonies, serving as a spirit medium between the realm of man and that of the spirits. She is shown with true aristocratic hauteur, her robe and hat and jewelry depicted with great care.

◁ 10. THE TOMB OF THE EMPEROR NINTOKU • Fifth century • Main axis of tomb, front to back: 480 m. (1,574 ft.); diameter of rounded part: 245 m. (803 ft.); height: 35 m. (114 ft.)

Amid the rice fields on the fertile plain east of Osaka are a number of elaborate tombs, of which this is the largest. From the air, its keyhole shape encircled by three moats is quite clear; from the ground, however, it appears to be a large hillock. Emblems of worldly power, these tumuli are symptomatic of a deep desire in ancient man to build something which was overwhelmingly grand and everlasting.

12. HEAD OF GIRL, *HANIWA* • Fifth century • Height: 20 cm. (7.8 in.)

This head, said to have come from the vicinity of the tomb of the Emperor Nintoku, has the greater subtlety and refinement of form found in the *haniwa* of this region. Depicted with the utmost economy of means, the pensive expression of the face and the darkened slits of eyes and mouth make one forget that this is an object made of the simplest, roughened clay.





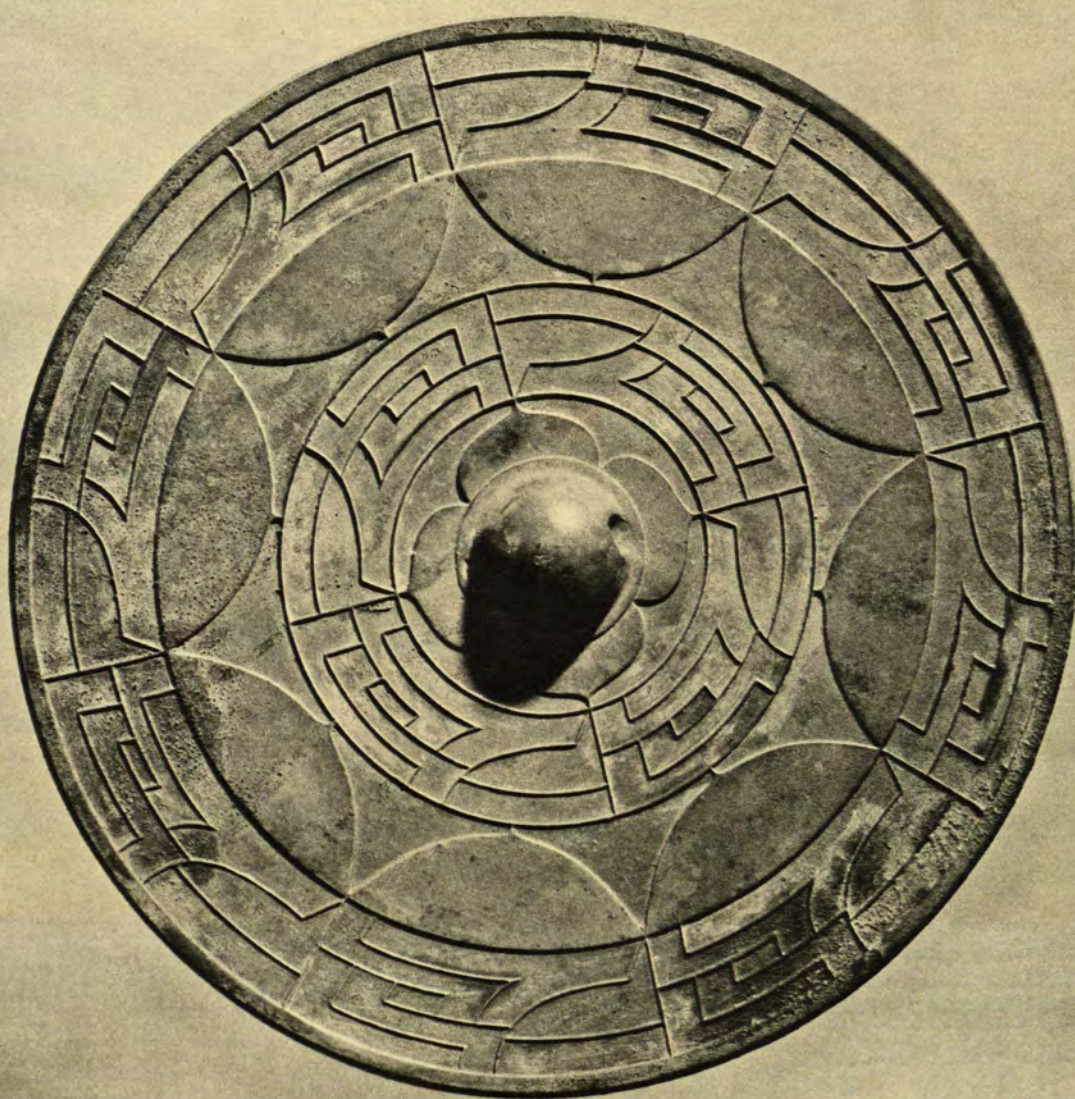
13. WALL PAINTING IN THE TAKEHARA TOMB.
Sixth century • Length: 111 cm. (43.2 in.); height: 133 cm. (52.2 in.)

This is one of many tombs in Kyūshū in which colored wall

paintings have been preserved. Between two upright standards are an armored warrior, horses, a ship, and waves—a depiction perhaps of the military or hunting exploits of the deceased done in a highly abstract manner.

14. BRONZE MIRROR ORNAMENTED
WITH A DESIGN OF FOUR HOUSES • *Fourth century • Diameter: 23 cm.
(9 in.)*

The Japanese delighted in the exotic ornament of mirrors from China and treated them as objects of great value. However, with characteristic independence of spirit, they began to make mirrors with their own motifs, such as this one which depicts four native-style buildings. The two types which are shown standing on high foundations have been preserved to this day in traditional Shinto architecture.



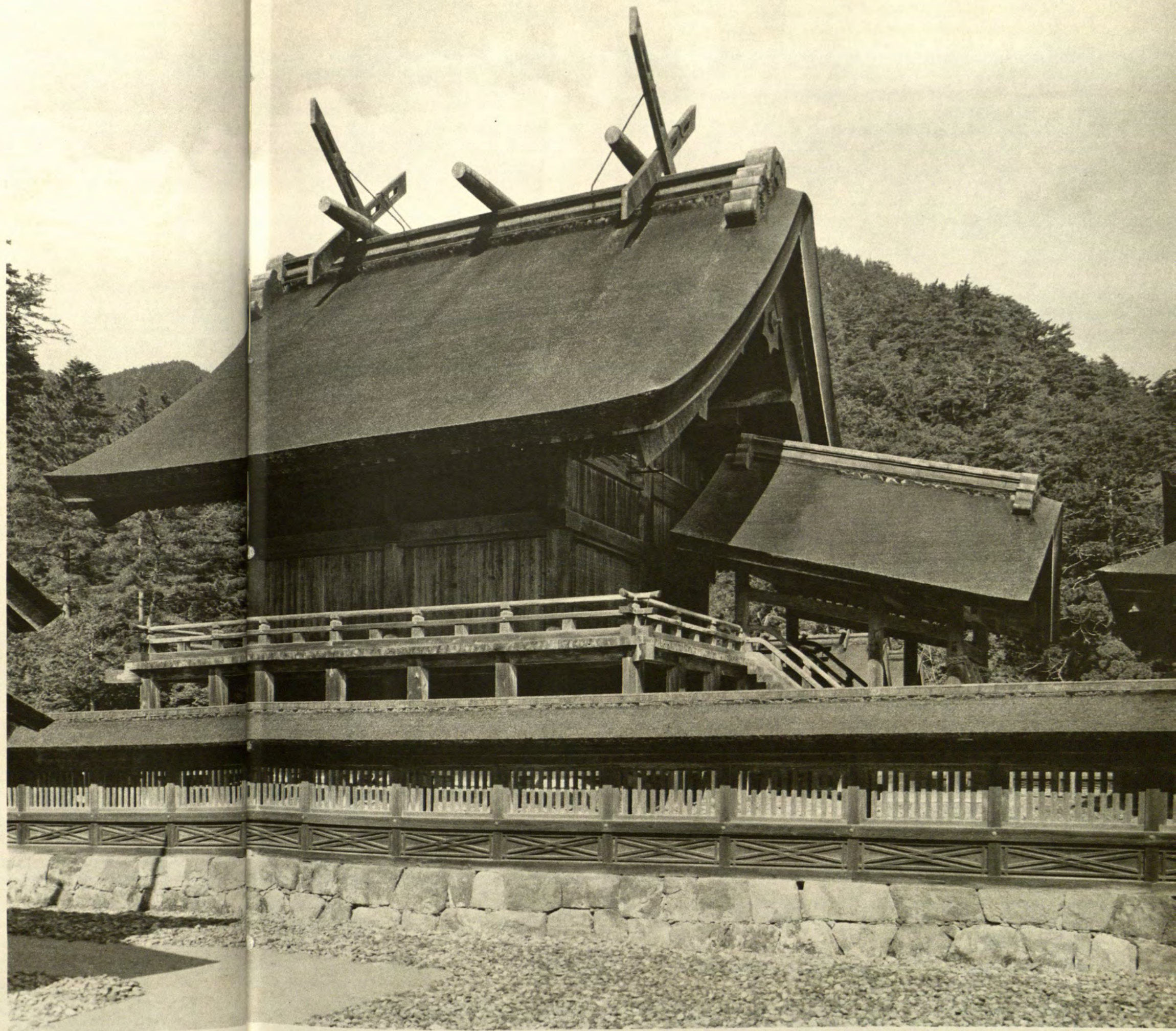
15. BRONZE MIRROR
WITH CHOKKOMON
DESIGN • *Fourth century • Diameter: 28 cm. (11 in.)*

This design of straight and bow-shaped lines is uniquely Japanese and one which apparently had a magic or sacred significance. The pattern, although distinct and lucid in form, has overtones of mystery, for it is slightly baffling in its complexity—a highly sophisticated concept which clearly marks the passing of the primitive directness of the most ancient designs.



16. GILDED BRONZE HELMET • Fifth century • Height: 21 cm. (8.2 in.)

The aristocratic warriors of the ancient period entered battle in gilded armor, perhaps inspired by a vision of the glory attained by a man on the battlefield. This finely wrought bronze helmet is made of many small plates riveted together and held by gilded bands. On the bands are motifs drawn with stippled dots—cows, birds, fish, and the like.



17. THE MAIN HALL OF THE IZUMO SHRINE

The region was, in antiquity, the seat of the powerful Izumo clan, and it is said that this "main hall" (*honden*) was patterned after the dwelling of the clan chief. Even today, it vaunts its assertive air in the upward thrust of the great roof of cypress bark and its fittings. The hall was said originally to be at least twice the height it is now, for the Japanese people, as they began to consolidate their strength, exulted in the challenge of vast building projects.



18. THE INNER SHRINE AT ISE

Dedicated to the divine ancestress of the imperial family, the inner shrine has been rebuilt at least fifty-nine times in its history and yet has preserved its ancient form. Set within a forest of giant old cedars, these buildings are imbued with the simplicity and quiet restraint of the native tradition. The roof is of heavy thatch; the roof members are symbolic adaptations of functional forms still occasionally used in farm buildings to give structural stability. Unpainted and barely ornamented, the building retains that strong sense of physical purity and sympathy with natural materials which is so essential to Shinto ritual and arts.



19. BEARERS OF FOOD OFFERINGS, ISE

Twice a day, at dawn and sunset and regardless of the weather, a silent procession of priests in white robes moves along the gravel paths bearing offerings of food to the deities. From the remote past to the present there has been the unflagging conviction that the gods live and must be served.



20. FOOD OFFERINGS

The food offerings are cooked by special attendants over purified fires in accordance with ancient customs and consist of sea foods and vegetables or fruit—the bounty of ocean and mountain. In their spartan simplicity these dishes are imbued with the spirit of a way of life deeply aware of the most elemental forces of nature, of life and prosperity, of hardship and death.

21. OUTER HALL OF WORSHIP, ISE > OUTER SHRINE

It is very difficult to enter the rough enclosures which surround the main hall of the inner shrine, but there are other buildings in the area which are also built in the antique manner. Standing on great pillars which rise directly from the earth, this votive hall has a roof of reed thatch and bears a heavy ridge-pole, ornamental crossed rafters, and horizontal billets. The stairway is carved from a single log of squared wood, and within its striking simplicity is preserved a sense of strength and decisiveness.



II. The Yamato Region:

from Asuka to Ikaruga

■ THE ADVENT OF BUDDHISM. As the locale of Japan's most ancient capital and the cradle of Buddhism in the land, the Yamato district evokes great sentiment among the Japanese people. Bounded by a mountain rampart, the region lies at the southeast end of the vast alluvial Kinki plains; through it flow the gentle Asuka and Tomio rivers. Today this is a quiet country district of rice fields, orchards and wood lots on the hillsides; its charm is enhanced by vegetable gardens in the springtime and by vivid red persimmons in the autumn. All that remains of historic importance in the area are a number of Imperial tombs and the scanty vestiges of ancient temple compounds and palaces. These nonetheless invite the stroller and stimulate his vision of history.

This district was selected as the site of the capital because the encircling mountains made it easy to defend. Its remarkable fertility and beauty must also have been a factor; and the intense feeling of the Japanese for the Yamato region is conveyed by terms used in ancient texts to characterize it as the most excellent of places, the central core and heart of the nation—"Oh, what a beautiful country we have become possessed of!" Despite this, it had not been the custom in Japan to build a permanent, impressive seat of government. This was due to the animistic concept of the impurity of death; a palace was thought to be contaminated when the emperor died there. For each new sovereign, a new palace was built; and generation by generation, the seat of government moved through the plain, with modest buildings to house the relatively simple business of the state. However, the Buddhist temples erected in the late sixth century were free of this notion; having the air of permanency, they allowed the processes of building and ornamentation to become more stabilized. The culture of the Imperial Court in the Yamato country became increasingly centered on the rituals and imagery of the great monasteries, and entered into an era of artistic brilliance.

The Buddhist faith, which was flourishing in China and Korea, may have been first brought from the mainland to Japan by exiles. In the beginning, it must have been little more than a secret creed, with no energetic effort to spread it further. However, in A.D. 552 (or 538 by another account), King Syōng Myōng of the Korean state of Paekche (Kudara) presented Buddhist images and texts to the Japanese court and urged the adoption of this faith of Indian origin. At the time, the Buddhists of East Asia stressed the notion that the well-being of a kingdom could be promoted by supporting the Church—the ethical and spiritual level of the people could be raised, ceremonies could be performed to bring a nation under the protection of the huge and powerful Buddhist pantheon, the fertility of crops and the prosperity of the people assured.

Japan, however, had its own native religious system and did not respond easily to this recommendation. Moreover, a violent struggle for power was taking place among the powerful clans which surrounded the imperial throne, and the question of Buddhist worship became entangled in a purely political contest. After a prolonged dispute, the anti-Buddhist faction led by the Mononobe family was overthrown in battle. Triumphant was the Soga family, which had supported the faith; and Buddhism, freed of the danger of persecution, was given government support. Elated by their success, the Soga family built the splendid Hokkō-ji monastery near the Asuka River as a memorial to their victory. Today, still standing on the site is a small temple called the Asuka-dera, which contains a large cast-bronze image of Śākyamuni. The fate of this statue, however, has been almost as forlorn as that which pursued the Soga family, for it has been damaged by fire and clumsily restored, just as the Sogas were overthrown and their power broken. Apart from the statue, though, there is little to remind one of the ancient prestige of the family and their patronage of the first full-fledged temple in the land.

■ THE PATRONAGE OF SHŌTOKU TAISHI. It has never been forgotten that Shōtoku Taishi was probably the single person most responsible for the flowering of Buddhism in Japan. A prince of imperial blood, he was given the general control of the government during the latter part of the sixth century and the first quarter of the seventh, ruling as regent for his aunt the Empress Suiko. His true character and role in history have been obscured by the legends which sprang up soon after his death, many of them marked with supernatural events. He even came to be considered a manifestation on earth of the Buddhist deity Kannon (Avalokiteśvara), the embodiment of divine compassion—a reflection of his gentleness and wisdom. The Prince had been a member of the victorious Soga party,

but was disturbed by its despotism, its vindictive spirit, and by the aggressiveness of other powerful clans which interfered with the administration of the state. As a fervent Buddhist, Prince Shōtoku conceived of an ideal government conducted according to the spirit of the faith; as a progressive figure, he thought also of importing the highly developed culture of mainland China and Korea—especially the more sophisticated modes of government—using the paths of communication and the high level of learning offered by the Church. In A.D. 594, he assisted the Empress in issuing an edict promoting the prosperity of the faith; in A.D. 604, the “Constitution in Seventeen Clauses” was drawn up in which Chinese and Confucian concepts of central authority and respect to the throne were interwoven with Buddhist ideals.

The Soga family comes to mind as one walks in the quiet atmosphere of the Asuka River, whereas the memory of Prince Shōtoku permeates the great temple compound of Hōryū-ji, still standing at the village of Ikaruga. Sometimes called the Ikaruga-dera, the temple’s traditional histories state that it was founded by the Prince near his own villa for the sake of the soul of his father, the Emperor Yōmei. Over the centuries, buildings have been added in honor of the Prince himself. The “east precinct” (*tō-in*) of the temple is said to have been built on the very site where his villa stood, and remnants of dwellings of that period have been found beneath its halls.

What did the complex and demanding doctrines of Buddhism mean to the Japanese of this era? A learned man such as Shōtoku Taishi must have understood them deeply. He studied with Korean monks and is said to have been the author of commentaries on three texts (sutras) of Indian origin. But during a period when even the sutras themselves were scarce in Japan, one can imagine the limited level of understanding of the people in general. What often captured their hearts and attracted new converts was the sheer splendor of the temple buildings and images. It is true that the temples were intended primarily as dwellings for monks, who were housed in plain dormitories, austere in form; but in the center of most compounds were a pagoda, which enshrined relics of the Buddha Śākyamuni, and a *kondō* or “golden hall,” in which statues and paintings of the main objects of worship were installed. Another standard building was the *kōdō* or “lecture hall,” where monks and laymen would gather for the reading of religious texts before appropriate statues—these were the elements of importance to the laity. For their day, the buildings were vast in scale; each stood upon a substantial stone plinth and was capped by a large roof of gray tile, its woodwork painted cinnabar red. Rising above the heavy roof of the pagodas were masts with nine bronze rings, their gilded surfaces glittering against the sky; wind bells hanging from the eaves added a melodious sound as they swung in the breeze. Even today the visitor is captivated by the ensemble of forms in the “west precinct” (*sai-in*) of Hōryū-ji; in ancient times the impression must have been even more profound. Absent then were the private dwellings and the pine groves that now enclose the site, and the buildings must have seemed to float against the verdant green of the hillside. Monasteries such as Hōryū-ji were a refuge from the commerce and excited passion of the everyday world; being confronted by its unprecedented beauty, a devotee would have conceived more clearly the Buddhist ideal of the purity of the human spirit unstained by anger or egoism or lust, an ideal which governs both the concept of Buddhist Paradises in heaven and the symmetry and splendor of the temple on earth. The visitor who peered into the gloomy darkness of the *kondō* would have dimly perceived the golden images seated in stately splendor upon their pedestals high on the altar platform, their faces bearing a mysterious, unaccountable smile. Gazing up into the ceiling, he would have seen the intricate, multicolored canopies suspended overhead. Prayers chanted in a solemn monotone and the pungent odor of foreign incense assaulted his senses and drew him deeper into a world totally removed from that of his daily life. The buildings now standing in the west precinct of Hōryū-ji are reconstructions—mostly of a slightly later date—of those of the seventh century which were destroyed by lightning and fire. The visitor of today, with patience and imagination, can recreate the emotional aura which this temple had at the time of the first great expression of Buddhist devotion and art in Japan.

The plastic arts played a fundamental role in the spread of Buddhism throughout East Asia. Indeed, the very fact that the Church possessed a rich tradition of building and image-making is a major reason for its success. The fact that King Syōng Myōng of Paekche, who had previously given Buddhist statues to the Japanese, continued to send temple craftsmen and artists shows his own estimate of their importance. And the fact that the representative sculptor of the period, Tori of the Kuratsukuri clan, was given the rather exalted title of *Busshi* (“Master Craftsman of Buddhist Images”) indicates the high esteem he enjoyed.

■ **TORI AND HIS WORKS.** Hōryū-ji has preserved a number of statues from the workshop of Tori Busshi, and the two housed in the *kondō* are among the key monuments in the entire history of Buddhist art. One of these, as stated by the inscription on its halo, was made in A.D. 607 at the request of Shōtoku Taishi and the Empress Suiko. Representing the Buddha of Healing, Yakushi Nyorai, it was made in compliance with the wishes of the Emperor Yōmei, who had pledged both the statue and the temple itself at the time of his final illness twenty years before. The sculptor’s name is not given, but of this period, Tori is the only known figure who could have made such a work. The other example in the *kondō* does bear his name, the seated Buddha Śākyamuni and two standing attendants, which is dated fifteen years later, in A.D. 623. The inscription on the halo records that it was made by Tori Busshi for the benefit of the soul of the deceased Shōtoku Taishi in the next world. There are scholars

who hold doubts concerning both these inscriptions, but rather than wasting time prying into this possibility, one should use the inscriptions and statues to form a concept of the Asuka style. These images are at once affirmative and gentle in spirit. Each of the Buddhas sits erect, and his robe hangs down in front of the seat as a broad, emphatic planar surface. The silhouette of the figure makes a triangular shape whose formal quality is that of composure and stability. The undulations of the folds of the robe—not quite symmetrical in pattern—have a rhythmic solemnity about them. The enlarged hands and face convey a sense of composure and reliability. These are only part of the distinctive traits of this style, but even so, they reveal much concerning the broader basis of the culture of the time. Japanese Buddhist art was then still in an early stage of development; a variety of continental traditions were being imitated, and yet these works of Tori have a decided maturity and coherence of spirit. It is always difficult to account for a thing as subtle as the artistic style of a remote age, yet one fact seems clear: Tori Busshi received the patronage of Shōtoku Taishi and was assigned to projects in the most important temples of the realm. An honored specialist and not merely an anonymous craftsman, he must have shared in large measure the advanced ideals held by the Prince.

The style of Tori Busshi was influenced by that of China in the Northern Wei period—certainly there are similarities in the stone carvings of the great cave temples at Lung-men—but the true value of these images cannot be grasped merely by tracing the resemblances. The energetic vigor and precise formal organization of the Asuka statues are not to be found in those of the Northern Wei, for the spiritual atmosphere of northern China and that of the Japanese capital were naturally greatly different. There are strong analogies, however, between what is called here the Asuka spirit in sculpture and the deeds of Shōtoku Taishi. The sense of resolute energy in the statues of Tori is not out of keeping with Prince Shōtoku's determination, despite the resistance of the powerful clans, to enforce the reform policies intended to diminish their power. The instinct for regularity in the art of Tori may be likened to the Prince's enforcement of discipline among the courtiers by establishing a system of twelve ranks. It is possible that in matters of government and in images of the Buddha, Shōtoku Taishi and Tori Busshi were expressing common ideals—each in his own medium. Certainly, the feeling of tenderness amid great dignity in the statues by Tori is in complete harmony with our historical image of the noble Prince.

For a while after his death, however, those who upheld the Prince's ideals were forced along a thorny path. The Soga family once again rose in tyranny and attacked the sons of Shōtoku, finally forcing them and their families to commit suicide. The village of Ikaruga, where the Prince had lit the lamp of the Law, became the scene of the miserable last moments of his descendants. The spilling of their blood, however, was not entirely in vain. The ideals of Shōtoku Taishi were gradually realized, and Japan was transformed from an uneasy confederation of tribes and clans into a stable, well-ordered nation.

At the center of the east precinct of Hōryū-ji is the exquisite Yumedono ("Hall of Visions"). This was built in the eighth century for the sake of Shōtoku's soul by the Monk Gyōshin Sōzu, who lamented the fact that the palace where the Prince once dwelled had fallen into ruin. Behind the Yumedono is the Chūgū-ji nunnery, which contains fragments of an embroidered cloth hanging that also has a connection with the Prince. Called the Tenjukoku Mandara, it was woven after the death of the Prince by his consort, the Lady Tachibana Ōiratsume, and other women of his household. Grieving over his passing, they embroidered a scene of the paradise of the dead as a constant reminder of him. The remaining fragments are a precious relic of both the pictorial arts of the time and the craft of weaving and dyeing.

■ **THE FADING OF THE ASUKA STYLE.** Typified by the discipline of Prince Shōtoku, the austere spirit of the Asuka period gradually slackened off after his death, and the succeeding age sought new ideals. This becomes apparent in the lighter, more buoyant atmosphere of Buddhist imagery.

The tall statue at Hōryū-ji called the Kudara Kannon shows this tendency at an early stage. Absent in it is the highly organized, layered type of composition of the Tori style with its resultant gravity and seriousness. Instead, the elongated proportions produce a feeling of soaring exaltation not unlike that of certain Gothic images in the West. The art of Tori possesses a stability rooted in an awareness of the present world; the spirit of the Kudara Kannon aspires to escape from that reality. If the former shows a will to mold this world according to Buddhist ideals, the other reveals a deep yearning to leave the world, to escape to an unblemished realm beyond. It is true that the last half of the seventh century saw the increasing acceptance of the Buddhist faith and the building and ornamentation of temples, but it also saw a continuation of the savage struggles of the powerful clans, who resisted the strengthening of the central government and created a maelstrom of intrigue around the imperial court. The tragic fate of the family of Shōtoku Taishi was not the only result of this. Such wanton butchery and anguish may well have prompted men to yearn all the more for the benevolent grace of the Buddhist ideal. The statue of the meditating Bodhisattva of the Chūgū-ji is suffused with a sense of almost maternal tenderness, and actually it symbolizes the first stage in the career of the saviour Bodhisattvas, the vow of compassion to aid those who are lost and in distress. Because the age sought to imbue Buddhist imagery with the spirit of compassion, one can assume that this was essential to its spiritual needs. Hōryū-ji has been a religious center for more than a millennium; its buildings and cult images, in the subtle nuances of form, reflect such changes of spiritual aspiration.



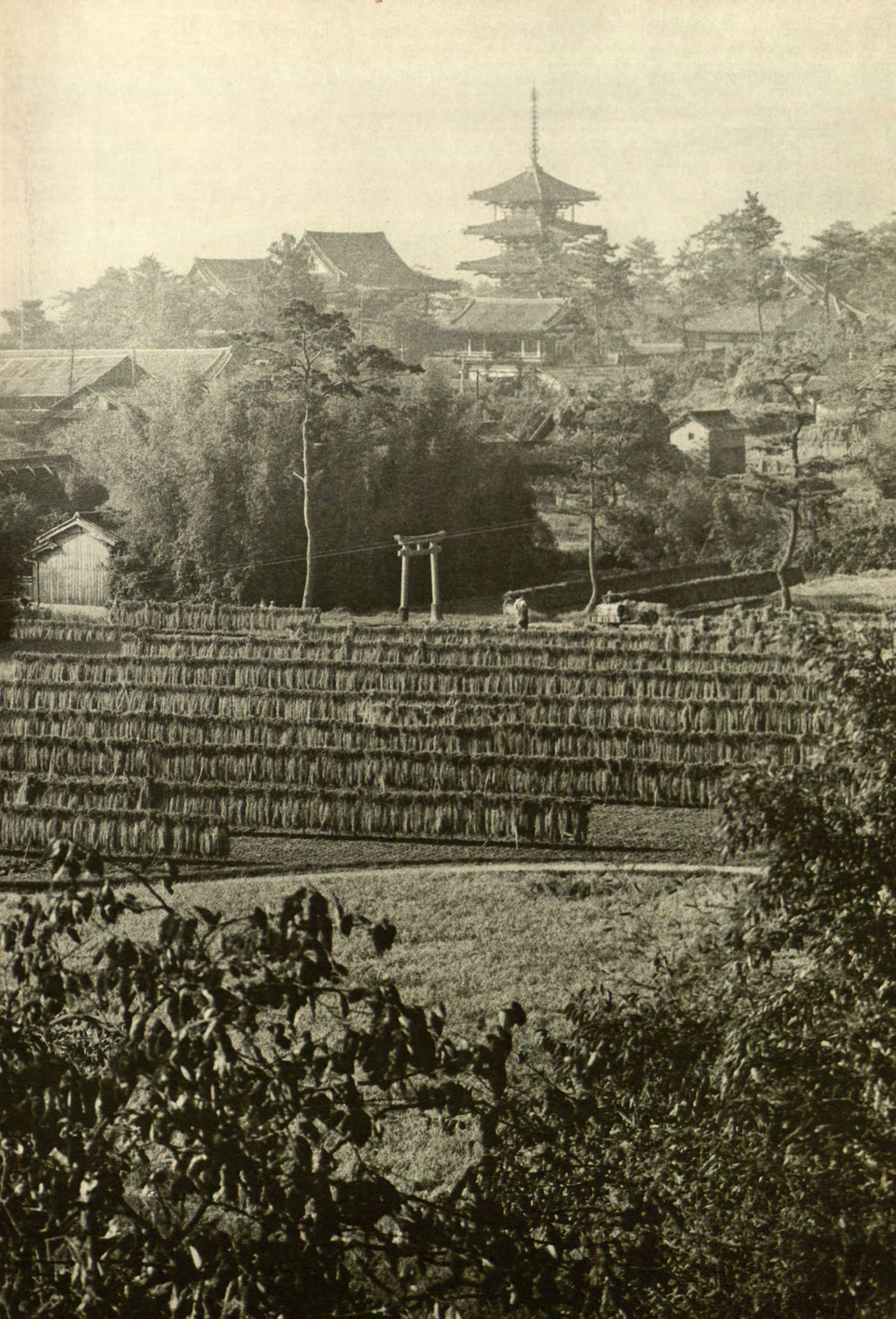
A youthful, boyish quality in face and body, for example, can be seen in six statues of Kannon (Avalokiteśvara) at Hōryū-ji, dating from the latter half of the seventh century. These are typical of a large number of small, gilt bronze statues of the period which were intended probably as household icons and later given to various temples. The unusual, boyish quality here contrasts with the attempts in the past to imbue Buddhist images with a sense of supernatural power or else one of exquisite grace. These statues were objects of worship, but they possess such charming directness that the devotee, rather than feeling a barrier of hieratic sanctity in the object, might almost wish to pick it up and caress it. The sculptors seemed to suggest that salvation would come more through the very act of worship than through the power of an almighty deity—as though childlike innocence and purity were the essential qualities of the faith.

The age in which this spirit arose—the latter half of the seventh century—is now called the Hakuho period, taken from the name given to the years A.D. 673–685 in keeping with the Chinese custom of assigning auspicious names to regnal periods. During this time the study and assimilation of continental Chinese civilization continued as energetically as before; yet the ingenuous spirit of innocence of the Hakuho statues is not to be found among the vast number of Buddhist images in China; it can be seen in only a few Korean ones. Also, it is strange that an attitude which seems to disdain the human intellect should appear in Buddhist art at this time, but one ancient trend in Buddhist thought has stressed intuitive, heartfelt communion with the divine. Its philosophy negated the intellect by describing the highest sacred value as an unknowable essence—the ultimate void, felt only through intuition. In the Zen sect, this tendency grew in later centuries to be a prominent factor in Buddhist art; here it was manifested as gentle beauty in an uncomplicated, almost artless guise. Such a spirit must have had a strong appeal in an age of political tension and disorder, just as imperial edicts inspired (perhaps naively) by the ideals of Buddhist compassion were issued throughout the latter part of the century, forbidding the use of cruel traps by hunters or eating the flesh of animals, ordering the installation of household shrines and the freeing of slaves. The quality of youthful innocence in the arts, however, may also have been a reflection of the lyricism and economy of expression which have been ever-present in native Japanese thought, apparent in the *haniwa* figures as well as in the *Man'yō-shū*, a collection of ancient poems rich in examples from the Hakuho era. In sculpture, this attitude was conveyed by the slenderness of arms and torso, in the frank, open expression of the face; it resisted any suggestion of aggressiveness and physical power. The human figures in the paintings of the Tamamushi-no-Zushi (the “Beetle Shrine” of Hōryū-ji) also show this clearly. Not only does the youthful Brahman have a slender neck, so also do the guardian devas painted on the upper doors, who by long tradition should have been bulky and vigorous. But rather than calling this a predilection for youthful forms alone, it should also be seen as a growing affinity for finesse and delicacy, one which led sculptors to delight in decorative effects in shallow relief. A taste for delicacy was yet another extension of the expressive range of Japanese art; the Hakuho period thus saw the growth of artistic sophistication but also the restoration of that touch of simplicity which lies close to the heart of the native tradition.

Only a half-mile north of Hōryū-ji are a pair of temples in which a few survivals from the Asuka period can be seen—Hōrin-ji and Hokki-ji. There are various explanations of their origins, but in their small and intimate scale, they seem to reflect the patronage of individual families rather than that of the Imperial Household itself. It was a great loss when the three-story pagoda at Hōrin-ji, built in the Asuka style, was destroyed by lightning in 1944; however, a striking wooden Bodhisattva image has been preserved there. In its canon of proportions—short torso, enlarged hands and head—it is diametrically the opposite of the tall and slender Kudara Kannon. It is considerably more archaic in spirit, even though of a slightly later date—an atypical but appealing work among the Buddhist images of the period.

22. DISTANT VIEW OF HŌRYŪ-JI ▷

The roofs of the ancient temple compound rise above the quiet fields of the Yamato country. When first seen by men of the seventh century, these buildings must have evoked a sense of wonder and awe—the nine golden rings atop the towering pagoda, the woodwork painted bright cinnabar red, the roof tiles flashing in the sunlight—architectural forms born on the mainland of Asia and suffused with the spiritual ideals of Buddhist India.





23. FIVE-STORY PAGODA, HŌRYŪ-JI • Total height: 32.45 m. (122 ft.)

The pagoda of Hōryū-ji contains a relic box in the foundation stone beneath its central pillar, for the pagoda form originated in India as a memorial to enshrine relics of the Buddha—his begging bowl, his bones, or the like. The building is not functional in the usual sense. As a rule, the visitor does not enter it, nor can he climb in the interior. Instead, its lofty height and multiple roofs are a concrete expression of the soaring spiritual aspirations of the faith.

24. BRONZE STATUE OF YAKUSHI NYORAI • Seventh century • Hōryū-ji kondō • Height of figure: 63 cm. (24.8 in.)

Early Japanese Buddhists frequently turned to Yakushi, Lord of Healing, at times of illness and distress. The inscription on the back of this statue's halo, for example, states that the Emperor Yōmei, desperately ill, asked his sister (later the Empress Suiko) and his son Prince Shōtoku to dedicate a temple and image to Yakushi to aid in his recovery. His death postponed the work, but in 607 his wishes were finally carried out. Once covered with bright gilding which is largely worn away, this monumental bronze figure is installed on the dais of the *kondō* to the east of the Shaka trinity (Figure 25), which was most likely a product of the same workshop.





25. SHAKA TRINITY (ŚĀKYAMUNI AND TWO ATTENDANT BODHISATTVAS) • Seventh century • Height: central figure 86.4 cm. (34 in.)

Seated erect before the splendid halo, the Buddha holds his right hand in the gesture of consolation—a symbol of the faith as a trustworthy haven, a refuge from spiritual torment. The flickering fire patterns of the halos and the unworldly sheen of the gilded surface combine to suggest a crucible smoldering within, in contrast to the serenity of the figures themselves.

26. ATTENDANT BODHISATTVA FROM SHAKA TRINITY • Height: 93.9 cm. (36.9 in.)

Standing beside the solemn Śākyamuni, this figure is filled with gentleness and a sense of reserve and modesty. It is stocky in proportion, frontal and static, yet the sweep of its garment folds and scarves enhances its quality of exquisite grace. At a time when monasticism was still its main tradition, the Buddhist faith was austere and demanding; yet in beauty like this, a layman could experience something akin to religious exaltation.





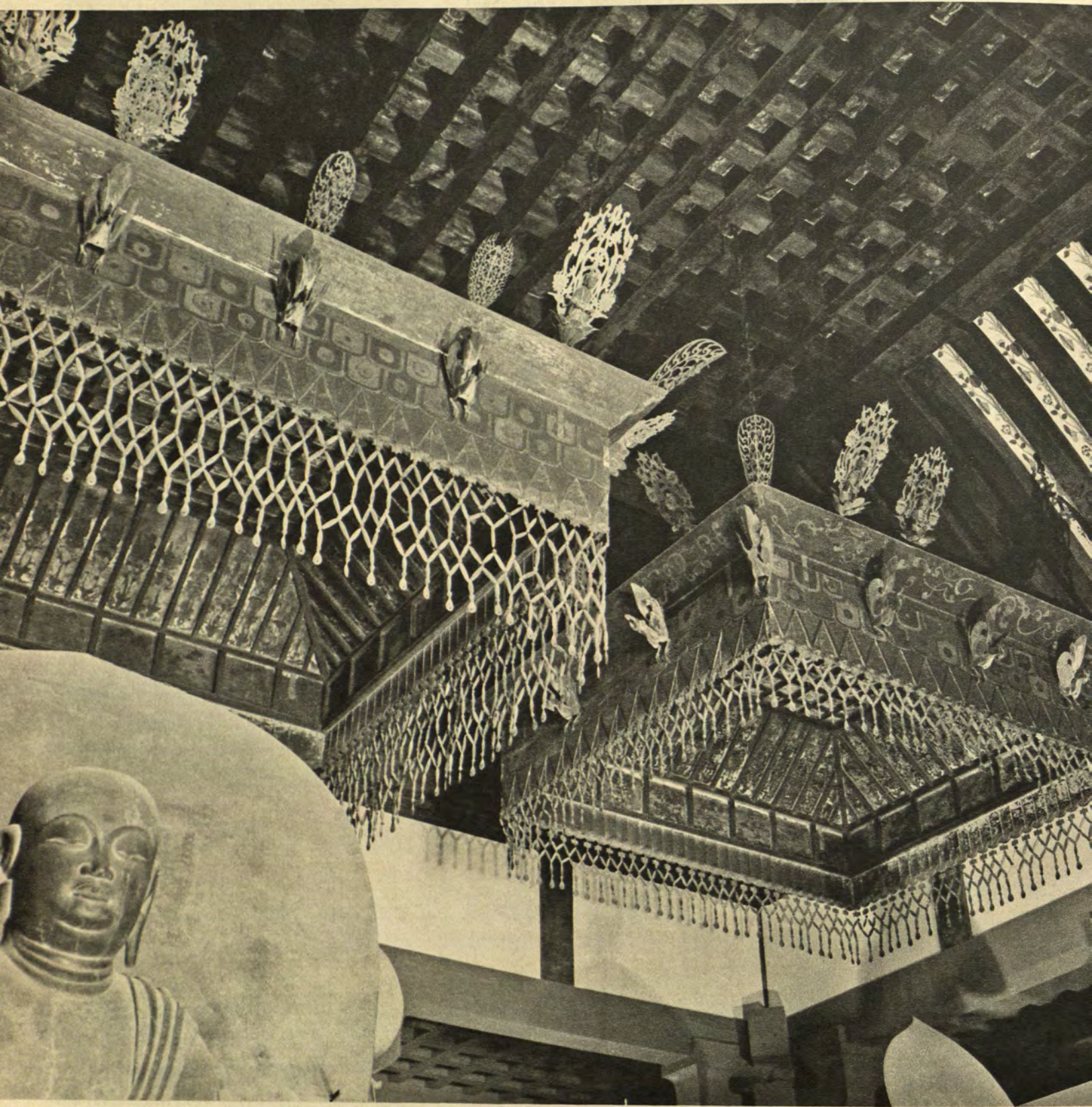


28. ZŌCHŌ-TEN • Hōryū-ji • Seventh century • Height: 134.8 cm. (52.9 in.)

The garment folds, carved in delicate relief, set up a melodious rhythm over the surface and enhance the sense of solidity and volume. Rather than scrupulously realistic, many of the details are handsome formalizations of natural shapes—the knot of cloth at the chest, the symmetry of the folds, the eyes, eyebrows, and lips. The crown, made of openwork bronze that was originally gilded, harmonizes with the open countenance of the face.

◁ 27. KŌMOKU-TEN • Hōryū-ji kondō • Seventh century • Height: 133.3 cm. (52.3 in.)

This is one of the Four Guardian Kings who guard the altar dias. Column-like in its torso, the figure conveys a sense of power and authority without the excited motion usually found in such militant figures. Its mood is reliable and stable, and the fanciful demon beneath his feet brings a humorous note to the darkened hall.



29. CANOPIES, OVER THE MAIN ALTAR OF THE KON-
DŌ, HŌRYŪ-JI • *Late seventh century*

Suspended above the three main Buddhist images are these brightly colored canopies. Lotuses and imaginary heavenly flowers (*hōsōge*) ornament the inner panels, together with patterns of green mountains. Pendants of glass are suspended from the net-like cords. Incorporating designs from China, India, and Iran, these canopies enhance the sense of divine glory which sets the main cult images even further apart from the atmosphere of the everyday world.

30. MUSICIAN FROM A CANOPY •

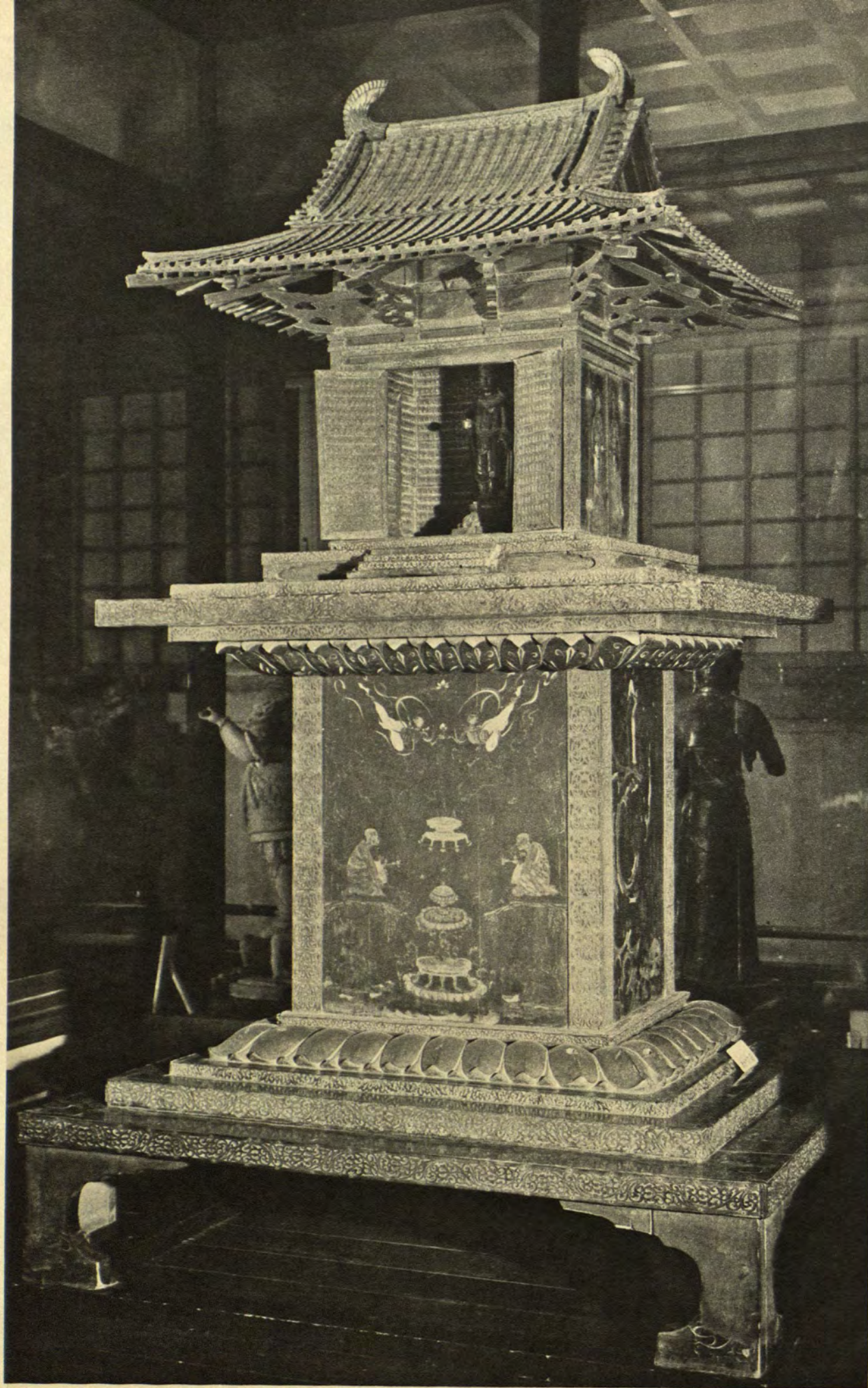
*Late seventh century • Height: 26.4 cm.
(10.3 in.)*

This figure plays upon its lute with innocence and charm befitting the realms of heaven. Scarves rise upward in a flowing rhythmic pattern; they end in blossoming flowers which, in both concept and appearance, are utterly visionary.



31. PHOENIX BIRD FROM A CANOPY • *Late seventh century*

This fabulous bird descends from paradise, celebrating the appearance on earth of the Buddha. Carved in wood, its highly schematized shape is far removed from that of a real creature, yet the vitality of a bird is expressed with extraordinary skill.



32. THE TAMAMUSHI SHRINE, HÖRŪ-JI • Seventh century • Height: 233.3 cm. (91.6 in.)

A tabernacle for a Buddhist statue, this shrine is celebrated for the fact that thousands of iridescent wings of the Tamamushi beetle were laid beneath the decorative bands of openwork bronze, originally gilded. The upper portion, built in the shape of a palace hall, resembles in some respects the *kondō* of Hōryū-ji.



33. THE BODHISATTVA'S SELF-SACRIFICE • *Tamamushi Shrine* • Height: 65 cm. (25.5 in.)

On both sides of the pedestal of the shrine are scenes of self-sacrifice by which Sākyamuni, in previous incarnations, demonstrated his devotion to truth and compassion for all beings. Shown here is the legend in which he had been born as a Brahman who

offered his life to a demon in order to hear the last part of a poem of great insight. The Brahman is shown at the bottom interviewing the demon; in the left center, he engraves in stone the sermon he has heard; in the right center, he is being caught in midair by the god Indra, who had earlier disguised himself as the demon in order to test the Brahman's resolve.



34. HEAD OF THE KUDARA KANNON • HÖRYŪ-JI •
Seventh century

The elongation of the face reflects the proportions of this uniquely tall statue, and the expression is gentle, almost maternal in spirit. The sinuous tresses of hair falling onto the shoulder strengthen this effect, and yet they, like the eyes or lips, are quite schematic and abstract in form. The flaking paint surface and cracks in the lacquer have not been repaired, for the patina of age is esteemed by those who respect the integrity of an object and the ways in which time transfigures it. The crown of openwork bronze was originally gilded, and it bears a small engraved image of the Buddha Amitābha above the central jewel.



35. KUDARA KANNON, HÖRYŪ-JI •
Seventh century • Height: 209.4 cm.
(82.3 in.)

Even with the gentleness of the face, a sense of sublimity is evoked by the extraordinary length of the figure and the forthright emphasis on lofty height. The crystallization of an ardent longing for spiritual grace, this religious icon possesses the beauty which, while born of faith, gives rise to faith as well.



36. BODHISATTVA IN WOOD • *Late seventh century • Hōryū-ji • Height: 106 cm. (41.8 in.)*

One of a set of wooden figures known as the Six Kannon, it is imbued with a youthful spirit which pervades many of the smaller cult images of the latter part of the seventh century. The surface was lacquered, gilded, and given an almost metallic finish, and strings of jewels were depicted over the body for the sake of elegance; yet the columnar simplicity of the torso and the open countenance of the face preserve an ingratiating charm.





37. BRONZE MEDITATING BODHISATTVA • *Seventh century* • Height: 41.5 cm. (16.3 in.)

This figure is seated in the position called "half cross-legged in meditation" which was often depicted in the sculpture of China, Korea, and Japan in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. One of its most moving and developed expressions, perhaps, is the wooden statue in the Chūgū-ji (Figure 45). This bronze image, small enough to have served as a household icon, is impressively reserved and grave; the slightly clumsy narrowing of the torso and the concomitant enlarging of the head result in a thoughtful presence whose face conveys esthetically the sense of divine compassion which is the symbolic significance of the pose itself.



38. DRY CLAY STATUE OF VIMALAKĪRTI FROM THE FIVE-STORY PAGODA, HÖRYŪ-JI • Eighth century
• Height: 51.5 cm. (20.3 in.)

Four groups of small, unbaked clay statues are arranged in grotto-like settings on the ground floor of the Hōryū-ji pagoda. Vimalakīrti is the leading figure from the group on the east, in which he is depicted as an ill and aged man to whom the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī comes in a visit of condolence. Vimalakīrti takes this opportunity to deliver (as depicted here) a sermon which includes remarks on the frailty of the human body and the way in which a layman in ordinary secular life can experience sanctity. The sculptor, working in a realistic idiom, attempted to imbue the figure with the ravages of illness and age and yet give him dignity and intensity of expression befitting the fact that Vimalakīrti is in the act of pronouncing some of the most profound of all Mahāyāna doctrines.

39. DRY CLAY STATUES IN THE FIVE-STORY PAGODA:
HÖRYŪ-JI • Eighth century • Height of individual figures:
approx. 46 cm. (18.1 in.)

This is a detail of one of the groups of dry clay figures on the ground floor of the five-story pagoda. It shows some of the disciples of Sākyamuni gathered in mourning at his death. A chorus of lament depicted in a realistic manner, their bodies tremble in the contortions of grief.







41. AMIDA TRINITY • *The Shrine of the Lady Tachibana, Hōryū-ji • Seventh century • Height of central figure: 33.3cm. (13 in.); attendants: 26.9 cm. (10.5 in.)*

Amitābha and his two Bodhisattvas are each placed on a lotus flower rising from a pond—symbolic of the spotless purity of their nature. Exquisite craftsmanship is shown in the openwork halo and the flowing rhythm of the low relief on the rear wall. Befitting its original role as a personal, household image, the intimacy of this miniature group reflects affection for the deities as well as respect and awe.

40. WALL PAINTING, HōRYŪ-JI KONDŌ • *Late seventh century • Size of total scene: 313×260 cm. (123×102 in.)*

This is a detail of the Buddha Amida (Amitābha) revealing the Law in the Western Paradise. On either side of his throne, bent in gestures of supplication, are the small souls reborn there to receive his instruction. Stylistically, a strong Indian flavor permeates this scene, as in the “lines of iron wire” used to establish the contours, and in the facial features and strict symmetry of the Buddha. The prominence of paradise motifs in the wall paintings of the *kondō* reflects the growing tendency for men to seek salvation in the grace and compassion of the great deities of the Buddhist pantheon.



42. YUMEDONO, HŌRYŪ-JI • *Eighth century*

Built at the site where Shōtoku Taishi once lived, this serenely proportioned octagonal-shaped hall presents a variety of visual effects as one walks around it. The roof ornament in gilded bronze is a complex combination of lotus flowers, a vase, canopy, ball-shaped jewel, and beams of light projecting in all directions. The notion of a divine force radiating from a central nucleus is carried out in both the building and its roof ornament, as though the Buddhist Law itself were being generated from this sanctified spot.

43. THE GUZE KANNON, YUMEDONO • *Seventh century* • ▽
Height: 197 cm. (77.5 in.)

According to pious tradition, this image was modeled after Shōtoku Taishi and given the same bodily length. In its hands rests the flaming gem, emblem of the Bodhisattva's power of salvation. The hair locks falling over the shoulders are strangely abstract in form, enhancing the frontality and archaic appeal of the statue.





44. TENJUKOKU MANDARA, CHŪGŪ-JI • *Seventh century*

Following the death of Shōtoku Taishi, his consort and attendants made two embroidered hangings to illustrate the Paradise where the soul of the Prince was thought to dwell. From the few remaining fragments, it is difficult to conceive of the original compositions; but the individual figures have an innocent, personal charm at a time when the arts were becoming increasingly hieratic.

45. THE BODHISATTVA IN CONTEMPLATION, CHŪGŪ-JI • *Seventh century* • Height from topknot to seat of figure: 87 cm. (34.2 in.)

Housed in the nunnery attached to Hōryū-ji is this remarkable statue, patterned after images of the First Meditation of Sākyamuni, when, as a prince, he first encountered the hardships and brutality of life and resolved to untangle the dilemma of human suffering. In this work is a distinct sense of gentleness which comes close to that of maternal tenderness—almost the archetypal expression of divine compassion. An aura of warmth and profundity is added by the wooden surface, once gilded, but now darkened by the passing of the centuries.





46. KOKŪZŌ BODHISATTVA • *Hōrin-ji*
• *Seventh century* • Height: 175.5 cm.
(68.9 in.)

The surface of the image betrays the effects of long weathering and abrasion, but in the process, it has taken on a kind of austere purity. Indestructible was the clarity of its style, which imbues the figure with stability and assurance.

III. Along the Western Side of Nara

■ A broad expanse of rice fields separates the modern city of Nara from the district called the Nishi-no-kyō ("Western Capital"). In ancient times, this was the sector west of Suzaku Ōji, the broad north-south avenue which divided the town into two parts. The area was built up with urban structures of which only two great temples remain today, Yakushi-ji and Tōshōdai-ji.

Construction of the Nara capital was begun in A.D. 708, but the planning and actual building of a permanent seat of government had started twenty years earlier in the Asuka district, only fifteen miles to the southeast. The site was that of the Fujiwara Palace, but the flat plain there, broken up by hillocks and ravines, proved to be too constricted for a great capital city laid out according to the principles of Chinese city planning. An urgent need was felt for a proper capital in order to maintain national prestige at a time of active international contacts and to provide a center for increased administrative and religious activity. In view of the fact that only a half-century earlier the government had moved upon the death of each emperor, the need was in itself proof of the rapid development of the internal organization and strength of the state.

The foundation of this growing cohesiveness was the coup d'état of A.D. 645, which is given the name of the Taika Reformation. Its leaders were a prince of imperial blood, Naka-no-Ōe, and the courtier Nakatomi-no-Kamatari. The latter was a thoughtful student of Chinese governmental theory and, upon his rise in influence, founder of the fortunes of the Fujiwara family. The prime goal of the Reformation was one which Shōtoku Taishi himself had worked to achieve, the establishment of the Emperor rather than the clans as the prime source of political authority throughout the land. To bring this about, the despotic Soga family was finally overthrown; an imperial edict was promulgated declaring that ownership of great tracts of land and their attached serfs was to be transferred from the clans to the national government; a census and land survey was to be drawn up; administration of the remote provinces was to be brought under the direct control of the capital. This attack on the economic and military basis of the power of the clans stirred up fierce resistance; but Naka-no-Ōe succeeded to the throne under the name of Emperor Tenchi and issued the so-called Ōmi Edict, which further strengthened the reform movement. Thus, by the end of the seventh century, the effects of centralization had become increasingly apparent, for the wealth and strength of the throne (and those surrounding it) had increased immensely.

While the Taika Reformation was prompted by internal problems, the Japanese were undoubtedly stimulated by the fact that China, under the early T'ang emperors, was at the height of its formidable power and boasted of a strong, centralized administration whose influence was felt in all aspects of national life. At the same time, the Chinese Buddhist Church was also flourishing, for, having continued to stress the doctrine that the faith would promote the prosperity and happiness of the nation, it received lavish support from the government. Following this pattern, the Japanese court also offered protection to the Church, and several emperors founded monasteries designated as special, state-supported temples (*kan-ji*).

The new seat of government in the Nara area was but one of the fruits of this firm, persistent policy of centralizing power. Large temples from other parts of the country were re-established in the capital, adding their architectural splendors to those of the imperial residence, the Heijō-kyū ("Palace of the Fortress of Peace"). The great monastery of Yakushi-ji was one of the first of these, and was relocated in the western side of the city.

■ THE DISTRICT AROUND YAKUSHI-JI. Yakushi-ji was originally built with imperial patronage in the Asuka district, at Unebi Kidono. Consecrated to the worship of Yakushi, the Buddha of Healing, it had been pledged by the Emperor Temmu in A.D. 680 in order to cure his Empress' illness; but more than twenty years passed before it was finished. Together with other temples in the Asuka district which served the court, it was transferred when the capital moved to Nara; the old buildings, however, were not dismantled but apparently reproduced on a larger scale at the new site, probably during the 720's. The old monastery at Kidono remained standing until the middle of the Heian period, bearing the name of Moto-("the former") Yakushi-ji. The Yakushi-ji at Nara also suffered greatly from earthquakes and fires, and of its original buildings, only one pagoda remains today. In its prime, however, it possessed two pagodas, a large *kōdō*, and a splendid *kondō* crowned with a two-level roof; the entire compound covered about twelve blocks.

Innovations may be seen in the layout of the halls at Yakushi-ji, and their design was experimental as well. Prior to this time, Japanese temples had only a single pagoda; in the oldest examples, such as the Shitennō-ji or Tachibana-dera, this was in the center of the compound sharing the main north-

south axis with the *kondō* and *kōdō*—a simple arrangement reflecting the central theological role of Śākyamuni, the historic founder of the faith. At Hōryū-ji, the pagoda and *kondō* were erected side by side, as though their sacral value were equal. At Yakushi-ji, however, the dominant position was given over to the *kondō* while the two pagodas were placed in a marginal, subordinate role—their duplication probably for esthetic reasons, for the needs of symmetry and visual balance. Of these two pagodas, it is the eastern one which has remained standing; the position of the other is marked by its basement platform and foundation stone in which the temple's sacred relics had been deposited. This change in architectural emphasis was probably a response to the change in devotions in which the many deities of developed Mahāyāna Buddhism began to replace Śākyamuni as the center of popular worship. The age was one of innovation in statecraft; coincidental with it were religious developments which, in turn, produced these new forms of temple building and decor.

The Yakushi-ji pagoda appears to have six stories whereas, in fact, it has three, but each floor is equipped with a protective outer corridor with its own roof, making a total of six tile roofs. In the past, most pagodas had five stories; that those at Yakushi-ji, a rich and important temple, had only three must again indicate the ebbing of the symbolic and sacral importance of the old-fashioned, tower-type pagoda. Builders are never satisfied, however, and perhaps at Yakushi-ji they devised this six-roof scheme to give the pagodas the illusion of a more dignified form, even though it meant placing the outer corridors on two upper floors where they had no real function. Perhaps this was a product of the boldness and enterprise of the Hakuho period, for the pagoda has another trait typical of the arts of the age, a strong rhythmical quality. The roofs, for example, diminish in size as they rise from bottom to top, but the eaves of each main story project farther out than those of the outer corridor. The result is a contrapuntal, almost musical relationship among the projecting forms. In contrast is the simple tapering outline of the roofs on the Hōryū-ji pagoda, which results, however, in a more monumental effect. The mast of the Yakushi-ji pagoda is as inventive as the rest of it; above the nine-ringed spire is a flame-shaped ornament of openwork bronze, in which angels are shown descending from paradise, playing flutes and harps and gesturing as though in a dance. Musical elements have a distinctive role, both symbolic and esthetic, throughout this towering monument and are quite similar to those present in the angels in the canopies of the *kondō* at Hōryū-ji, which date from about the same time. The appearance of these elements in the visual arts marks the transition from an age which had admired willpower and discipline to one which sought sentiment and charm.

In fact, during the Hakuho period, many forms of music were brought from the Asian mainland. Until then, the chief form of ritual dance and music had been the *gigaku*, said to have been imported first by the naturalized Korean Mimashi. It was performed in Buddhist temples as part of the services and also in the Palace, at banquets and receptions for foreign guests; it was prized as the only example of foreign music in Japan. *Gigaku* was, however, a very simple art form; for the most part the actors wore wooden masks, and their gestures were often humorous or grotesque; accompaniment was provided by nothing more than cymbals, small drums, and flutes. By the advent of the Hakuho period, however, the continuous traffic between Japan and the continent had resulted in new varieties of music entering the country from Korea and T'ang China, the latter having fancied the music of India, Central Asia, and even the Indies. *Gagaku*, the stately court music which has flourished for centuries in Japan, seems to have started up here and on the continent at about this time. Novel musical instruments were imported, such as the *koto* (a long zither), the *biwa* (a lute), and the flute-like *shō*. In a sense, the musical perceptions of the Japanese, hitherto rather dormant, were jolted awake by this veritable flood of foreign influence, and it is by no means unreasonable to detect a musical element in the visual arts of the time.

Other esthetic tendencies which developed toward the end of this fruitful era may be seen in Yakushi-ji's Buddhist images. Perhaps the most impressive of all these statues is the bronze Shō-Kannon, now enshrined in the Tōin-dō. If compared with the Kudara Kannon of Hōryū-ji, which was made at the most a half-century earlier, the esthetic impression is remarkably different, even though both depict essentially the same deity and have a similar sense of commanding, upright verticality. The later work is far more realistic in the modeling and structure of the body; but beyond this, where the Kudara Kannon has the quality of tenderness and almost maternal compassion, the far more masculine figure in bronze is imbued with a sense of radiant, divine energy. The youthful reserve of many early Hakuho figures is absent here, replaced by a greater maturity and solidity. The exact date of the Shō-Kannon is unknown; perhaps it was made around A.D. 700-710, about the time of the founding of Nara and the advent of the cultural epoch bearing the capital's name, one which began to think in terms of massive size and grandeur in the arts. Its form closely resembles some of the Bodhisattvas painted on the walls of the *kondō* at Hōryū-ji, also thought to have been done at this time. And while it is regrettable that the origins of such impressive works cannot be fixed more precisely, this very uncertainty gives some leeway to the imagination and sharpens one's perceptions of the pieces themselves.

Of the same period (or slightly later) are the giant, bronze statues of the main deity of the temple, Yakushi Nyorai, and his two attendant Bodhisattvas, housed in the *kondō*. Their bodies are imbued with an even greater sense of softness than that of the Shō-Kannon, almost to the point that the massive bronze surfaces seem pliable. In addition, the jewelry and clothing of the attendants were depicted with a lavish care that suggests a growing fascination with ornamental effects. Even the

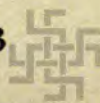
bronze pedestal of the central figure has intricate decorative designs which include the legendary Chinese animals of the four directions: the dragon, tiger, phoenix, and the combined tortoise and serpent. Several groups of mysterious semi-nude men and women are shown half-hidden on the pedestal, a motif unique in Japanese Buddhist art. Perhaps their presence implied that the merciful compassion of the faith would reach out even to such barbarous, aboriginal folk as they. Today, the altar platform is of white marble, Chinese in origin, but according to old records it was originally covered with agate and lapis lazuli and measured over thirty feet long and nearly two feet high. The pedestals of the images were enclosed with a golden cord; exotic woods were used in the handrailing, while rose sandalwood was placed in the ceiling over the altar. Not only were canopies suspended overhead, but at their corners were precious gems in the shapes alternately of the sun and half-moon. Even if there were rhetorical flights of fancy in these descriptions, one can well imagine the splendor of the original two-story *kondō* when the giant statues still retained their coating of gold. Such sumptuousness and ornamentation in art were a basic feature of the Nara period; they were fruits of the sheer wealth and power of the court, newly attained; they were also a reflection of the same taste in the urban civilization of T'ang China, just as the heavy roundness of the Yakushi figure reflected the canons of T'ang Buddhist images. While the esthetic spirit of the Hakuho age can be seen in the eastern pagoda, the Yakushi trinity expresses these new tendencies of the Nara period. Both were made at about the same time, however, which would seem to be a contradiction were it not for the fact that, even in times of great upheaval in artistic standards, the changes in traditional architecture have usually been less radical than those in sculpture and painting.

Yakushi-ji also possesses a painting of the Nara period which is worthy of note, a tiny image on fine hemp of the goddess Kichijō-ten (Sri Lakshmi, goddess of learning) shown as an opulent court lady. According to Buddhist sutras popular in the day, the Goddess would bestow good fortune on those who sincerely regretted their sins during a ritual of repentance. In an age so devoted to worldly power and luxury as the Nara period, Kichijō-ten was widely worshiped, and paintings or statues of her are to be found in many temples. The ritual at Yakushi-ji was first held in A.D. 772 and, with this painting as the *honzon* ("principal object of worship"), has continued to this day. Kichijō-ten is depicted here not as a heavenly figure but as an aristocratic lady very much of this earth and possessed of a distinct sensual appeal. Clearly discernible here is the type of divine beauty seen in the Yakushi trinity—idealized form strongly tinged with the appearances of the visible world. This feeling for actuality and the love of splendor gave great force to the arts of the short-lived Nara period, but they were also its greatest liability.

■ THE VENERABLE PRECINCTS OF TŌSHŌDAI-JI. A few hundred yards north of Yakushi-ji is the monastery of Tōshōdai-ji. It was built only a half-century later, but this half-century saw both the dawn of the arts of Nara and their twilight. The full noon, so to speak, is represented chiefly in the vast temple of Tōdai-ji, faintly visible among the buildings of the modern city to the east.

Tōshōdai-ji was built for the Chinese monk Chien-chen (or Ganjin in Japanese pronunciation), who had been invited in the mid-eighth century to come to Japan to correct the training and ordination procedures of the monks of Nara. The hardships of the journey and repeated shipwrecks cost Ganjin his eyesight; in fact, twelve years were spent between his first attempts and final arrival in Japan in A.D. 753, and the saga of his voyage is one of incredible heroism and forbearance. His coming had been eagerly awaited, for he was famed as a master of the Vināya, the rules of Buddhist monastic life. At the time, monasticism was still the basic pursuit of the faith, and even though the Church in Japan was prosperous and influential as never before, the discipline of the monks was not properly enforced. Temples in the capital had been infected by the air of opulence and pleasure-seeking surrounding them, and it was hoped that Ganjin would be able to strengthen the training and self-control of the clergy. Upon his arrival, he began instructing not only the monastic brotherhood but also the Emperor Shōmu, the Empress, the Crown Princess, and members of the court; soon he sought to have a seminary built in a secluded part of the capital where he could properly teach the Vināya. With the patronage of the Imperial Household, the site of a mansion belonging to Prince Nitabe was taken over, and an audience hall from the Palace was dismantled and rebuilt to serve as the lecture hall of the new temple, which came to be called Tōshōdai-ji (the T'ang monastery). This hall is still standing, together with the *kondō* and sutra storage, from the time of the temple's founding. The monks' dormitory was remodeled in the Kamakura period, and the front part converted into a "hall of relics," or *shariden*; the bell tower dates from this time as well. Each building thus has a slightly different esthetic spirit, but their placement is the original one and they harmonize together so well that Tōshōdai-ji, together with Hōryū-ji, is one of the rare places where the aura of an ancient monastery remains more or less intact.

The first thing seen by the visitor entering the south gate is the severe, impressive *kondō*, but groves of pine trees standing within the precinct soften slightly the mood of monkish austerity. Nothing eccentric or discordant strikes the eye, nothing which speaks of the overweening ambitions of man; but in the interior of the *kondō* is an array of large statues which express the limitless power and grace of the Buddhist pantheon. A seated statue of Birushana (Vairocana) is placed in the center, emblem of the origin of all things in the cosmos, even all other deities. Although lacking personal or emotional qualities, Birushana was a deity to which the Nara court was devoted, as is shown by the



gigantic bronze image of him completed in Tōdai-ji just before Ganjin's arrival in Japan. To the right is Yakushi Nyorai, and to the left is Kannon, here endowed with a thousand arms in literal evidence of the Bodhisattva's powers of salvation. The first two images are made of hollow dry lacquer, a technique popular then in China, and some of the gilding still remains on their surfaces to glow in the darkened hall. Among them are placed wooden figures of Brahma, Indra, and the Four Guardian Kings, making an imposing phalanx of statues to which the devotee can come unusually close when he stands at the massive wooden doors of the portico.

The statues of Tōshōdai-ji, especially the wooden ones, are quite unique for their time, for they seem to have been among the first works in which the realism and ornamentation of the Nara period were consciously rejected. In their day, they must have had a strong impact on those whose eyes had become attuned to the atmosphere of other Nara temples, for they sought a spiritual quality which lay beyond realism and physical grandeur. This sober style, together with the austerity of the buildings, is in full harmony with the original purpose of the temple as a seminary; it accords also with what is known of the personal character of Ganjin, who surely must have influenced Japanese craftsmen as well as the sculptors and architects who came with him from China. The ideals and memory of Ganjin pervade this temple as thoroughly as do those of Shōtoku Taishi at Hōryū-ji.

Until recently, a portrait statue of Ganjin was enshrined in a humble founder's hall atop a small hillock behind the former monks' dormitory. This statue, made about the time of his death in A.D. 763, is a careful record of his features, especially his blindness. Although Ganjin was deeply revered, the unknown sculptor made no attempt to flatter his appearances and avoided any suggestion of ostentation, thus capturing with sober realism the severity and calmness of the monk's character.

In these two temples on the west side of the ancient capital, one can clearly feel the spiritual forces which gave birth to the arts of Nara and then, at the end, corrected their extravagances.

47. PAGODA, YAKUSHI-JI • Eighth century • Height: 39.9 m. ▷
(130.8 ft.)

This is basically a three-story pagoda, but the roofs over the protective outer corridors give it the appearance of a six-story one. The building has an air of lightness and a strong rhythmic feeling which might be thought of as a translation into architectural form of the bold cadences of the poems of the *Man'yō-shū*. The spire of the pagoda is especially fine; angelic musicians in delicate open-work bronze appear above the nine rings, sweeping downward among flame-like patterns.







48-49. SHŌ-KANNON, TŌIN-DŌ, YAKUSHI-JI • *Eighth century* • Height: 188.5 cm. (74.1 in.)

Beneath the diaphanous garments can be seen the outlines of the sturdy, masculine body. No trace of sentimentality was allowed to intrude in this aloof figure, standing upright in solemn majesty. Necklaces and strings of jewels are depicted with loving care, giving evidence of the growing taste for rich decoration of the time. The ideals which engendered this figure must have fluctuated between those of physical beauty and those of the transcendental faith.



- ◁ 50. YAKUSHI TRINITY,
YAKUSHI-JI • *Eighth*
century • Height of Yakushi:
254.8 cm. (100 in.); height
of Gakkō: 309.4 cm. (121.6
in.); height of Nikkō: 311.8
cm. (122.5 in.)

Originally gilded, the surfaces of the cast bronze have darkened over the centuries into a lustrous black. The bodies of the deities, far larger than life, are ponderous and heavy, and the two attendants are richly adorned with jewels, as though in affirmation of the fullness of the world. The Buddhist faith of this period had become closely linked with material as well as spiritual rewards.



51. ABORIGINAL FIGURES ON THE PEDESTAL OF THE
YAKUSHI STATUE, YAKUSHI-JI • *Eighth century*

The lavish decoration of the pedestal of the Yakushi statue includes a number of semi-nude figures thought to represent barbarous aborigines. Their significance is uncertain, but they may well have symbolized the ideal that blessings of the faith reached even to persons of this sort—compassion for all beings in the universe.



52. GRAPEVINE PATTERN FROM THE PEDESTAL OF
THE YAKUSHI STATUE, YAKUSHI-JI • *Eighth*
century

The design in low relief which runs along the upper rim of the pedestal of the Yakushi statue is one of several exotic elements there, attesting to the cosmopolitan outlook which was gathering force both in China and Japan. In the minds of the Chinese, grapes had long been associated with western and central Asia, and the grapevine motif played a prominent role in the decoration of T'ang metalwork. When imported into Japan, it was still a fresh and meaningful design.





54. *KONDŌ, TŌSHŌDAI-JI • Eighth century • Dimensions of ground plan: 28×14.65 m. (91.8×46.5 ft.)*

The eight massive columns of the portico lack that gentle swelling along the shaft, akin to the entasis of classical Greek columns, which appears at Hōryū-ji; but they do have a strong sense of structural stability. The open porch was a new development in its day, reducing the width of the interior and emphasizing the feeling of horizontality in the facade. The eaves, supported by a complex, three-stage bracketing system, are thrust out far from the walls, adding an element of decisive boldness.

◁ 53. *KICHIJŌ-TEN, YAKUSHI-JI • Eighth century • Height: 53.3 cm. (20.9 in.); width: 32 cm. (12.5 in.)*

The Goddess of Wealth and Beauty, Kichijō-ten, was frequently given the guise of a handsome court lady. This tiny work is a rare example of Nara period painting, but is considered typical for the extraordinary finesse of its craftsmanship. The unknown artist lavished great care in depicting the jewelry with gold leaf and showing the embroidery patterns, and he imparted a subtle, rhythmic undulation to the transparent veils.



◁ 55. INTERIOR OF THE KONDŌ SEEN FROM THE PORTICO • Height of Birushana: 340 cm. (133.6 in.)

Made at the same time as the *kondō* itself, the imposing statues harmonize with it in scale and proportion and reflect the early stages in the transmission of the new religious system of Esoteric Buddhism, more complex and profound than the old. The central figure contains a thousand small Buddha images in his halo, for he is Birushana (Vairocana), personification of the essential, first principle of being, from which the entire cosmos and the rest of the vast Buddhist pantheon itself has emerged.

56. BODHISATTVA FIGURE IN WOOD • Tōshōdai-ji • Eighth century • Height: 171.8 cm. (67.5 in.)

The combination of swelling volume with brooding, austere energy reflects new criteria of beauty in the arts which began to appear at the very end of the Nara period. The image was originally coated with thin plaster and painted, but the flaking away of the paint has revealed a beauty in the carving which surpasses that of color.



57. LECTURE HALL, TŌSHŌDAI-JI • Eighth century •
Dimensions of building plan: 33.8×13.52 m. (110.8×42.25 ft.)

Originally built as an assembly hall in the Imperial Palace compound in Nara, this building was moved to the temple and converted into the *kōdō*. Its air is one of extreme horizontality, in marked contrast to the tall, imposing *kondō* which stands before it. In the deep projection of its eaves and in the resolute manner with which it asserts its long and narrow proportions, one can savor the generous spirit of the Nara period.





58. PORTRAIT OF THE MONK GANJIN (CHIEN-CHEN) •
Eighth century • Height: 79.7 cm. (31.3 in.)

In his attempts to reach Japan, the Chinese monk Chien-chen endured hardships which cost his eyesight and brought him to the brink of death. The founder of Tōshōdai-ji, he was one of the most revered personalities in the history of Japanese Buddhism, and this portrait was probably made about the time of his death at the age of seventy-seven by an artist who must have known him well. Severely realistic in intention, the image nonetheless captures the intangible qualities of serenity and spiritual insight.

59. FOUNDER'S HALL, TŌSHŌDAI-JI

Until recently, the portrait statue of Ganjin has been enshrined in the founder's hall situated on a small hillock behind the monks' dormitory. Extremely small and humble, the building served as an appropriate memorial to the saintly man who sought neither wealth nor honor. The image has now been transferred to a newly rebuilt hall, a hundred yards or so to the northeast.





60. OVERALL VIEW OF TŌSHŌDAI-JI

In the middle of the upper lefthand section, partly hidden by trees, is the pagoda of Yakushi-ji.

IV. The Capital City of Nara

■ TO TŌDAI-JI. As one approaches Nara from afar, the great roof of the Daibutsu-den and its golden ridge ornament can be seen against the gentle slope of Mount Mikasa as though floating in a sea of verdant woods. To this day the Daibutsu-den, the main image hall of Tōdai-ji, remains the most fitting expression of the city and its history, for it was the monument which marked the achievement there of centralized governmental power in the eighth century.

The Emperor Shōmu had planned to base his rule on a union of both religious and political principles and, wherever there was a provincial government, to establish monasteries and nunneries as branches of Tōdai-ji. He vowed also to create as the main object of worship at Tōdai-ji a giant statue of Birushana (Vairocana) Buddha. In Buddhist theology, this deity was the source and origin of all things in the cosmos, even the other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. As the central cult figure of the foremost official temple of the nation, this statue was the very nucleus of the Emperor's project of centralizing both secular and religious power. The image rose to a height of over forty-eight feet; twelve years were spent in overcoming countless technical difficulties. The bronze casting had to be repeated eight times; the number of workers employed and the amount of material invested were immense. Without the strength of a centralized government, a project of this magnitude would have been quite impossible. Finally, on April 9, 752, a sumptuous ceremony of consecration was performed in the temple courtyard before the Daibutsu, a ceremony which also marked the completion of the centralization of state power, of which the giant statue was the most dramatic symbol. Standing to the right and left of the great bronze statue were two attendant Bodhisattvas made of dry lacquer, almost thirty-three feet high. In addition, at the four corners of the hall were placed dry clay statues of the Four Guardian (Deva) Kings, each nearly forty feet high. It required an additional thirty years to furnish the Daibutsu-den in full splendor and to complete the entire complex of attached buildings. In 1180, however, this was almost all destroyed by fire in the Gempei war which raged at the close of the Fujiwara period. Of the Daibutsu statue as it exists today, only parts of the lotus pedestal remain from the original, the upper sections having been reconstructed in 1691. The hall itself was rebuilt about ten years later considerably smaller than before; even so it is still known as the largest wooden structure in the world.

Unchanged over the centuries, however, is the gilt bronze lantern in the center of the fore-court, its large size indeed appropriate to the scale of the Daibutsu-den. The octagonal light chamber is a splendid shape; its doors are ornamented with angelic musicians and lions in low relief; its roof is crowned with a sumptuous flaming jewel. The exquisite qualities of the lantern are characteristic of the art of the Nara period and reminiscent of the many lost splendors of the period at Tōdai-ji.

Just to the east of the Daibutsu-den is a hall which also preserves relics of the same period intact. Called the Hokke-dō or the Sangatsu-dō, both the building and its contents miraculously escaped destruction by fire. While it is not a large structure, its interior is crowded with statues representing primarily deities of Indian origin who serve as attendants and guardians in the Buddhist pantheon. The main cult image is of Fukūkensaku Kannon, over fourteen feet high. Arrayed with it are Bonten (Brahma), Taishakuten (Indra), the Four Guardian Kings (Shitennō), and the two World Guardians. All of these are made of dry lacquer; but in addition, dry clay statues of four other deities were moved here from some other hall: Nikkō (Sūrya, the sun-god), Gakkō (Candra, the moon-god), Benzaiten (Sarasvati, the goddess of learning), and Kichijō-ten (Srī Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and beauty). This concentration of large statues comprises an almost complete review of the expressive range of Nara period sculpture.

The largest of all, the six-armed statue of Kannon, is typical of the period, for it is masculine and sturdy and radiates in a serene way a sense of immense power. Moreover, it is embellished by an ornate necklace, halo, and canopy; its sparkling crown catches the eye even in the dim light of the darkened hall. The crown, two feet in diameter, is made of silver, ornamented with a filigree pattern of jeweled flowers, and hung with thousands of pearls, beads of quartz and agate, and other gems, showing to the full the degree to which sheer earthly wealth had entered the monasteries. In harmony with this, the other dry lacquer images project a sense of magnificence and power; in the dry clay figures, however, the sculptors seem to have searched for a deeper spiritual quality. Nikkō and Gakkō press their hands together in prayer; their faces impart an impression of piety. The spirit of this age sought above all sheer grandeur and magnificence, but it also strived to express the more modest spirit of devotion. At the rear door of the hall is a dry clay statue of Shūkongō-jin (Vajrapāni) enshrined as a secret image. A remarkable example of realism, it vividly expresses the wrath and anger

of this militant deity. Because it has been kept carefully sealed, much of its original coloring has been preserved—an essential part of eighth-century sculpture.

Clay and dry lacquer statues such as these were commonly made in the Nara period. The techniques had been newly imported from T'ang China in the search for variety in artistic expression, and the prime reason for their popularity was the suitability of the soft materials to a realistic style. The artists of the Nara period, like those of T'ang China, tried to create lifelike qualities in terms of animation and vigor, sought to imbue Buddhist imagery with the appearances of ordinary mortals; they moved in the direction of realism in order to interpret religious experience in terms of the ordinary world.

In addition to the Shūkongō-jin, other outstanding examples of realism in the dry clay technique are the Four Guardian Kings, in the Kaidan-in, the hall for the ordination of monks at Tōdai-ji. Few people visit this hall, and the atmosphere of the ancient temple seems indeed to have survived along the quiet paths around it. The Guardian Kings were probably brought from somewhere else; but unfortunately, their original place of installation is unknown. Each of the four Kings was made life size, standing upon a small demon or evil spirit. Each figure was given its own distinctive pose, and especially noteworthy is the manner by which its energy was expressed. Violent action was avoided; rather the power was shown to be latent within a quiet pose. In striving for realism in order to communicate a feeling of vitality, the sculptors of the Nara period did not simply copy precisely the external appearances of an object. Instead, one feels that reality in itself has been created, so rich in esthetic significance are statues like the Four Guardian Kings.

Before the destruction of so many Nara temples in the Gempei war, great numbers of realistic images must have been seen throughout the city. The works which survived, however, had a great effect upon the restoration work begun in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, for the new carvings were done in a highly descriptive style which harmonized with that of the old. Revival of the taste for realism thus became one of the major characteristics of the sculpture of the later Kamakura period.

■ THE SHŌSŌ-IN TREASURE. An ancient warehouse called the Shōsō-in is located about 360 yards behind the Daibutsu-den of Tōdai-ji, and for this reason it escaped the fires which ravaged the temple. The repository contains primarily the rich personal effects of the Emperor Shōmu, founder of Tōdai-ji. His widow, the Empress Kōmyō, presented them to the Daibutsu for the sake of Shōmu's soul on June 21, 756, in a ceremony marking the forty-ninth day after his death. They have been kept under imperial seal and preserved intact to the present. Although possessions of the Emperor comprise the bulk of the Treasure, it was further enriched by later donations; Tōdai-ji itself donated implements used in Buddhist rituals. The collection abounds thus in an extraordinary variety of things kept in safety for over twelve hundred years—writing materials, musical instruments, clothing and ornaments, weapons, Buddhist ceremonial implements, medicines and written documents. From their perfect state of preservation, it is possible to see vividly the arts and crafts of the Nara period and also to understand something of the material content of contemporary Asian civilization.

Resting on forty pillars over eight feet tall, the storehouse was built high off the ground in order to keep out dampness. It was made chiefly in the so-called *azekura* system, in which the ends of the wedge-shape timbers cross each other and project outward at right angles. This gives such structural solidity that neither internal pillars nor walls were needed; the contents were well maintained by the way in which the logs would swell in humid weather—thus shutting out the moist air—and shrink in dry weather, allowing air to enter and ventilate the interior. The building is composed of what were originally two separate square log buildings which were joined together, thus the interior is partitioned off into three sections: the north, center, and south storerooms. Long and narrow and majestic in scale, Shōsō-in asserts an air of perfect composure.

The contents of the collection can be divided into two kinds of material: the prized personal belongings of the Emperor Shōmu, which were chiefly objects imported from the mainland, and the implements actually used in such Buddhist rituals as the consecration ceremony for the Daibutsu. The former were stored under imperial seal in the north and center storerooms, while the latter were placed in the south storeroom, sealed off with rope tied by three officials of the temple. By now, however, the contents have become mixed together; consequently for a number of objects it is difficult to determine whether they were made in Japan or imported from abroad. This is because the Nara period was a time of enthusiastic assimilation of continental culture, and the Japanese themselves had perfected continental designs and techniques. Until recently, pottery in the Shōsō-in bearing two- or three-color glazes had been thought to be of Chinese origin; but now, on the basis of certain details of technique, it is clear that they were made in Japan. In addition, there are many splendid brocades whose origins are difficult to distinguish, for Japanese crafts at that time had reached a high level.

When the Shōsō-in Treasure is seen as a whole, the esthetic character of the crafts of East Asia in the eighth century is clearly apparent; for the taste of the court of T'ang China was the same as that of the court at Nara. As the T'ang empire greatly expanded, it assimilated the culture of the surrounding lands. Its crafts show this best of all, for they took in many exotic designs, materials, and techniques—softening and harmonizing them, creating an art of opulence with an appealing international flavor.

Strong influence was exerted by Iran and South Asia. From the former came the popular arabesque-like designs of grape vines, pearl borders, and winged horses, as well as the craft of marquetry (wood inlay). From South Asia came the use of ivory, tortoise shell, and mother of pearl in the thriving craft of shell inlay. Luxury goods and textiles have not been well preserved on the mainland, but because the Japanese of the time used them as a standard, the Shōsō-in Treasure is one of the main sources of information concerning the arts of the T'ang period. The craftsmen of Nara imported rare materials from abroad as best they could, but they were also obliged to work out substitute materials and techniques. There are examples in which artificial stones were used in the place of jewels, and colorful decoration was made of silver and gold leaf or made up of painted motifs. The crafts of the Nara period sought for brilliant color effects taken from exotic sources, but it must not be overlooked that a major characteristic was also the search for boldness and vitality. Within the decorative forms, one can feel a sense of power expanding from inside the structure; table legs show positive strength in the way they stand; in decorative patterns there is endless elasticity and fluidity of form. Just as the art of sculpture developed realistic techniques in its search for esthetic vitality, so in the realm of the crafts, liveliness was a major goal. The Nara period was one which extolled the flood tide of expanding life, and the words of a poem well state the character of the period at the peak of its prosperity: "Like the fragrance of a blooming flower, the colorful capital of Nara reaches its prime."

■ KŌFUKU-JI. Even though it was a private temple, Kōfuku-ji ranked with the official state temple of Tōdai-ji as one of the main sanctuaries of the capital. It was supported by the wealthy Fujiwara clan, whose influence over the imperial court gave it immense power and prestige. Kōfuku-ji's founder was Nakatomi-no-Kamatari, the able statesman who led the family to political supremacy in the mid-seventh century, at the time of the Taika Reform; and the temple thereafter mirrored the rise and then the fall of the family's fortunes.

It was originally located at a Fujiwara residence at Yamashina, near Kyoto. Then it was moved close to the imperial palaces in the Asuka district, where it was called the Umayazaka-dera. When the capital was transferred to Nara, Kōfuku-ji was moved again to its present site. In the Heian period, Tōdai-ji lost its protection as the official state temple, but Kōfuku-ji remained the family temple of the Fujiwaras, then at the height of their prosperity; on occasions, the temple itself exerted direct influence on the throne. When the power of the Fujiwaras was finally broken, however, the temple suffered the ravages of frequent fires and most of its buildings were lost. The later restorations did not maintain the architectural grandeur of the temple; now all that remains are a few buildings of later periods, and the original splendor is lost beyond recall. The early Buddhist images are also few in number; works of later periods predominate, but among these, fortunately, are masterpieces of their day.

Kōfuku-ji employed many artisans on a hereditary basis, and its organized workshops served the entire capital. Receiving his training at Kōfuku-ji, for example, was the master sculptor Jōchō, the foremost Buddhist sculptor in Kyoto in the eleventh century. In the late twelfth and thirteenth, the masters who carried on the tradition of the atelier—Kōkei, Unkei, Kaikei, Tankei, and others—were active not only in the reconstruction of Kōfuku-ji but also of Tōdai-ji. It is true that the present appearance of the temple is not very striking; but its remaining statues bear eloquent proof of the fact that Kōfuku-ji, as both workshop and training center, left a mark of great distinction on the development of Buddhist art.

Representative works of the Nara period still remaining are the Hachi Busshū (eight demonic guardians of the faith) and six statues from a set of the Ten Great Disciples of the Buddha—all done in dry lacquer. It is thought that the Empress Kōmyō ordered them made in A.D. 745 for the sake of her mother, the Lady Tachibana, and that they were placed in the west *kondō* around the main cult image of Śākyamuni. Each is made of dry lacquer and is hollow in the middle. Each reveals the fresh, eager acceptance of realism, but in the flawless, youthful face of Ashura (Asura) there is a trace of the ancient idealistic tradition which extolled perfect beauty. A youthfulness resembling this can also be seen in the statue of Subodai (Subhūti) among the Disciples. Within these two groups of statues there are many variations of pose and facial expression, for the sculptor took great pains to show differences of age, personality, or symbolic spirit.

From the time of the Kamakura-period restoration have been preserved a giant statue of the Fukū-kensaku Kannon (Amoghapāśa) and portraits of the six patriarchs of the Hossō sect which were placed in a circle around it. These were made by Kōkei and his followers and installed in the south circular hall. In the north circular hall were statues of Miroku (Maitreya) Bodhisattva and two ancient Indian theologians Seishin (Vāsubandhu) and Muchaku (Asanga), which were carved by Kōkei's son Unkei and his assistants. Unkei's style was characterized by imaginative realism, which is especially evident in the portrait-like features of the Indian sages. At Kōfuku-ji are many other works produced by the Unkei school which are widely admired for the variety and richness of realistic treatment. Paired together with a statue of the Bodhisattva Monju (Mañjuśrī), is that of the mythical Indian sage Yuima (Vimalakīrti) who was shown with meticulous regard for the effects of age and illness. The sculptor was Jōkei, who also made the two dynamic Guardian Kings (Niō) in which he captured the tension of muscles and bones of men in violent movement. Jōkei's younger brother Kōben made

statues of two demon lamp bearers, Tentōki and Ryūtōki, which are masterpieces of subtle humor. It should not be forgotten also that the master sculptor Kaikei, pupil of Kōkei and collaborator of Unkei, also worked in the Kōfuku-ji atelier. None of his works remain in the temple, however, but are to be found in Tōdai-ji, where Kaikei had been a favorite artist of Chōgen Shōnin, the monk who supervised the reconstruction work at the temple.

As for the architecture of Kōfuku-ji, the oldest extant buildings are the north circular hall and the three-story pagoda, but these are little more than reminders that this compound once held more than a hundred temple halls and dwellings. However, even in the temple's rather forlorn state today, the south circular hall is counted as one of the thirty-three places in western Japan sacred to Kannon Bodhisattva. Supported by the faith of the common people, it attracts crowds of pilgrims even today.

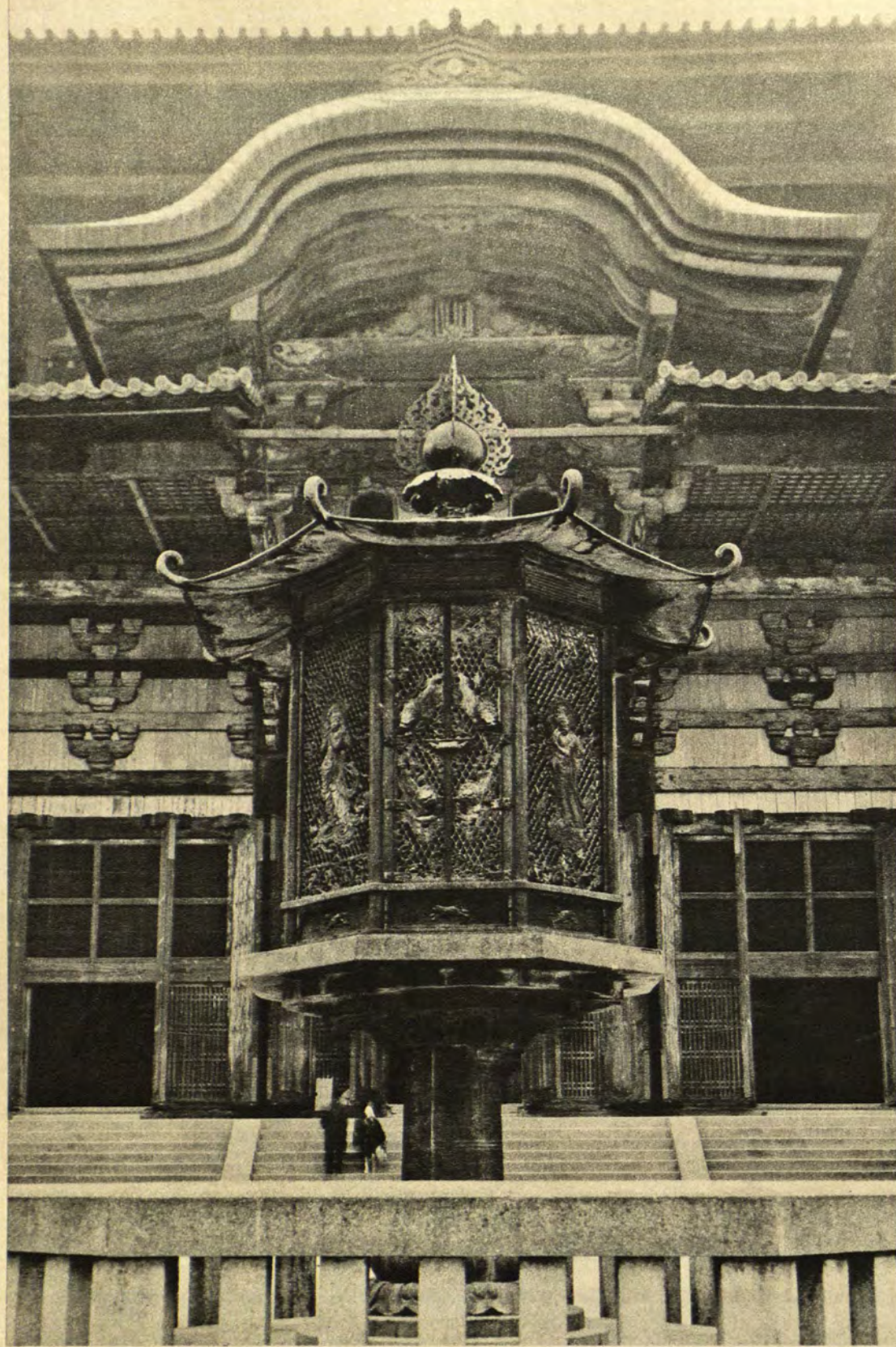
■ THE KASUGA SHRINE. This shrine is dedicated to the protective deities of Kōfuku-ji, a group of militant Shinto gods whose cult had been transferred from eastern Japan. In this same way, the native war god Hachiman had been moved from the Tamukeyama Shrine in Kyūshū to Nara in order to serve as the tutelary deity of Tōdai-ji.

The integration of Shinto and Buddhist cults was not unusual in the Nara period. It promoted the rapid growth of the imported faith by bringing it under the spiritual protection of the indigenous gods of the land, and the fusion of creeds was mutually beneficial. The handsome style of architecture of the Kasuga Shrine was probably adapted from Nara period Buddhist buildings. Making skillful use of the slope at the foot of its mountain, the shrine is built in a colorful display of vermilion and green; indeed, it seems to reflect the Fujiwara family's fondness for audacity and boldness. Because the shrine received the support of this family for many generations, its impressive rituals preserve the flavor of aristocratic life at the imperial court. The performance of the *bugaku* dance has been handed down here in an unbroken tradition; and even today the elegant form of dance called the *Yamato-mai* is offered in worship of the deities of the region. An ancient custom of donating votive lanterns prevailed originally among the Fujiwara clan; later it became a popular form of piety, and for this reason the shrine precincts and approach paths are crowded with thousands of lanterns in stone, metal, and wood.



61. A VIEW OF NARA

Twelve hundred years ago, the new capital extended out into the distant fields. Throngs of monks, courtiers, warriors, and craftsmen gathered from all parts of the country and mingled in the thriving life of the capital. Today, only a few of the temple halls and pagodas remain, but here and there—in a corner of a temple compound or along the quiet back streets of town—the flavor of ancient days still lingers on.



62. BRONZE LANTERN BEFORE THE DAIBUTSU-DEN OF TÔDAI-JI • Eighth century • Height: 4.62 m. (15.33 ft.)

Those coming to pay homage to the Daibutsu must pass beneath the lantern standing in the center of the courtyard. Dedicated to the Daibutsu at the time of the statue's completion, it is one of the finest of all relics of the golden age of Nara.



63. BRONZE LANTERN DETAIL



64. INTERIOR OF THE DAIBUTSU-DEN, TŌDAI-JI

In its original splendor, the bronze Daibutsu was a symbol of the power of both the immense Buddhist pantheon and the well-governed empire of Japan. The ancient statue has been ruinously damaged, but even as it appears now in its restored form, one can imagine the sounds and colorful spectacle of the Buddhist services which unfolded before it.

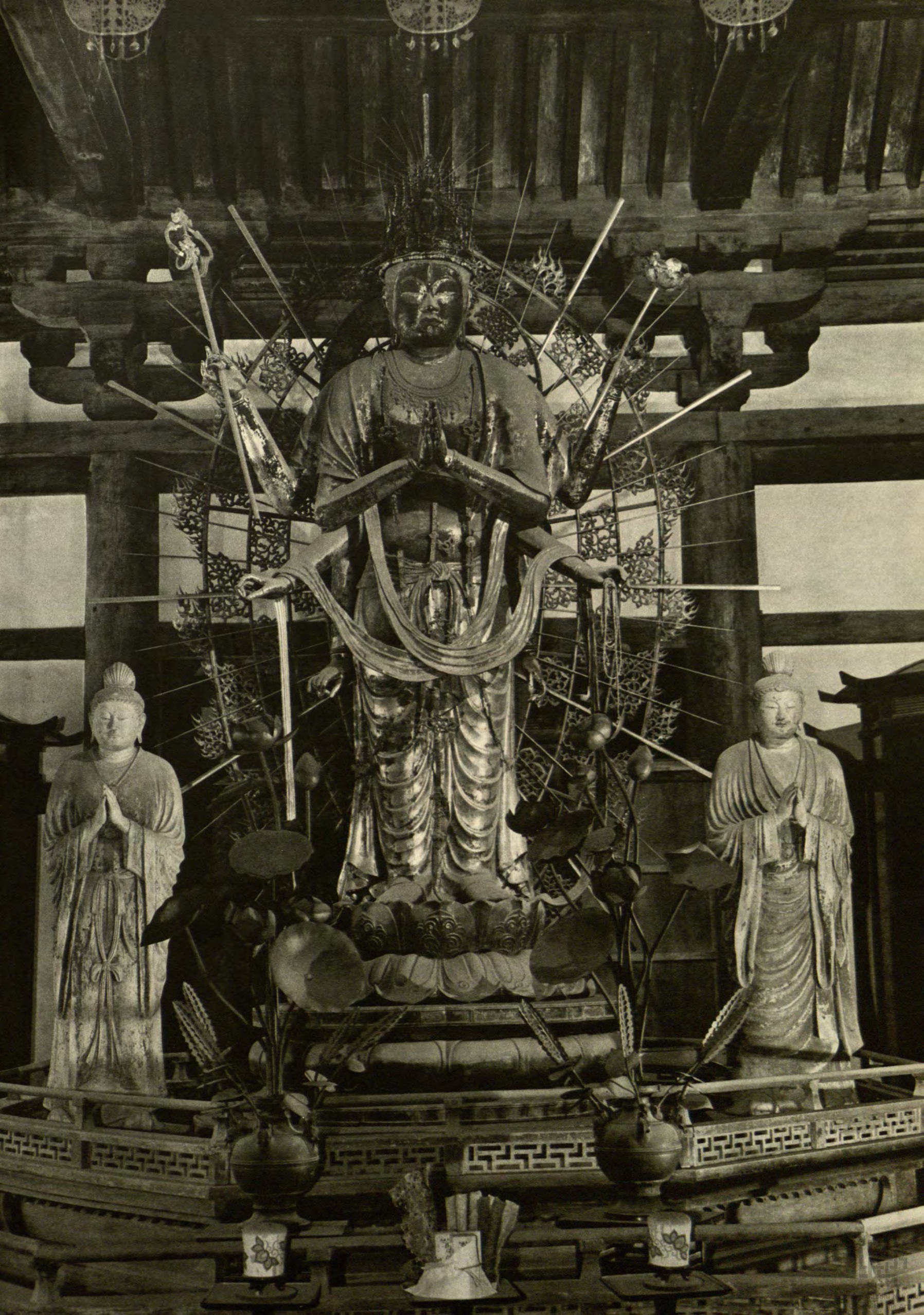


65. THE SANGATSU-DŌ OF TŌDAI-JI

While relatively small in scale, this building is an invaluable relic of early architectural forms, for it miraculously survived the fires which destroyed almost all of Tōdai-ji. It is best known for the statuary which fills the interior, but its exterior form, with simple and classic serenity, speaks eloquently of a great building tradition.

66. INTERIOR OF THE SANGATSU-DŌ • Eighth century • ▸ Height of Kannon: 364 cm. (153 in.)

Upon entering the darkened hall, one is overwhelmed by more than ten large statues crowded together, in contrast to what one might imagine upon seeing the classically simple exterior. In the center stands the main object of devotion, the dry lacquer image of Fukūkensaku Kannon wearing a glittering crown. In attendance on either side are statues of Nikkō and Gakkō made of unbaked clay.





◁ 67. SHŪKONGŌ-JIN • *Sangatsu-dō* • Eighth century • Height: 173.9 cm. (68.3 in.)

Because it has been kept closed from view as a secret image, this dry clay statue retains much of its original brilliant color. It projects the warm vitality of the Nara period as it expresses the rage of the thunderbolt bearer, one of the many militant guardians of the Buddhist faith.



68. GAKKŌ • *Sangatsu-dō* • Eighth century • Height: 206.6 cm. (81.1 in.)

Its hands pressed together in prayer, this reverent form projects a mood of composure and dignity far removed from the distractions of the world. The flaking off of the color from the surface of the clay has given it a purified quality, enhancing in this accidental way the sculptor's efforts to depict a spiritual state with a realistic style.



69. THE MONK CHŌGEN SHŌNIN • *Early thirteenth century*
• Tōdai-ji • Height: 82 cm. (32.3 in.)

The monk Chōgen devoted the last years of his life to soliciting funds and materials for the rebuilding of Tōdai-ji after it was burned in the Gempei war. This remarkable portrait, probably carved soon after his death at the age of eighty-six in 1206, depicts him with a type of mordant realism suitable to an aged monk who would have entertained no vain concern for his personal appearances. Realism in the Kamakura period was in many ways a revival of the realistic tendencies of the Nara period; but none of the works of the older era has quite the expressive power of this, whose sunken eye sockets, wizened neck and cheeks, and slumped posture make it one of the most notable essays of its kind in the entire history of art.

70. KONGŌ RIKISHI, SANGATSU-DŌ • Height: 331.8 cm. ▷
(130.7 in.)

With his body clad in leather armor, this figure does not have the bulging muscles of the usual, half-nude Rikishi statues. The hair bristling about his howling face shows the sculptor's skill in a rhythmical, modulated realism, illusionistic enough to suggest that the deity actually exists.





◁ 71. JIKOKU-TEN • *Kaidan-in* • Eighth century • Height: 160.4 cm. (63.1 in.)

One of the dry clay statues of the Four Guardian Kings atop the ordination platform. Handled in a skillfully realistic manner, the figure has the frightful power which the deity should possess, but it is not shown in an obvious way. The taste of the artist, restrained and imaginative, must have produced this significant change in expression.

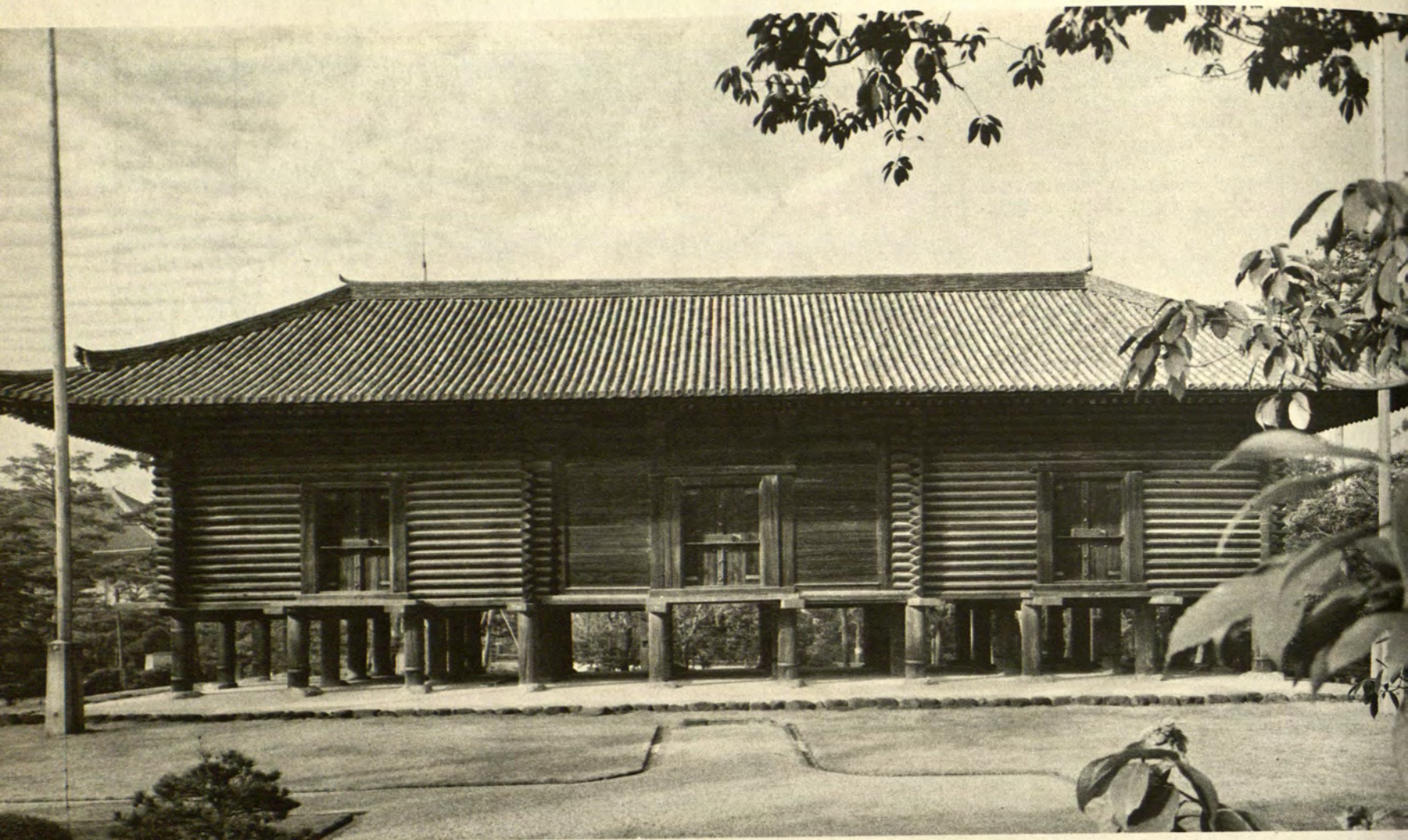
72. ZŌCHŌ-TEN • *Kaidan-in* • Eighth century • Height: 165.4 cm. (65 in.)

In each of the Four Guardian Kings, energy and anger are expressed by different body poses and facial features. With the eyes bulging and the mouth opened wide, this head can be said to express the active spirit of rage. The sparkle of the black obsidian inserted in the pupils of the eyes adds to the feeling of realism and vitality.



73. KŌMOKU-TEN • *Kaidan-in* • Eighth century • Height: 162.7 cm. (63.9 in.)

With his brows knitted, eyes narrowed, and mouth closed, this image seems to be watching a distant enemy. Restrained in facial expression and bodily gesture, it suggests the amassing of energy and the fearfulness of its release. Its power is in a potential state, and the realism is understated.



74. SHŌSŌ-IN • Eighth century • Facade: 33.22 m. (109 ft.); side: 9.45 m. (31 ft.); height of ridgepole: 13.94 m. (45.7 ft.)

This ancient warehouse is a treasury of precious objects which were offered to Tōdai-ji during the eighth century in honor of the Daibutsu. Constructed of giant timbers, it is divided into three large storerooms which, miraculously, have preserved their fragile contents intact for over twelve hundred years.

75. SHŌSŌ-IN • Detail of corner construction ▷

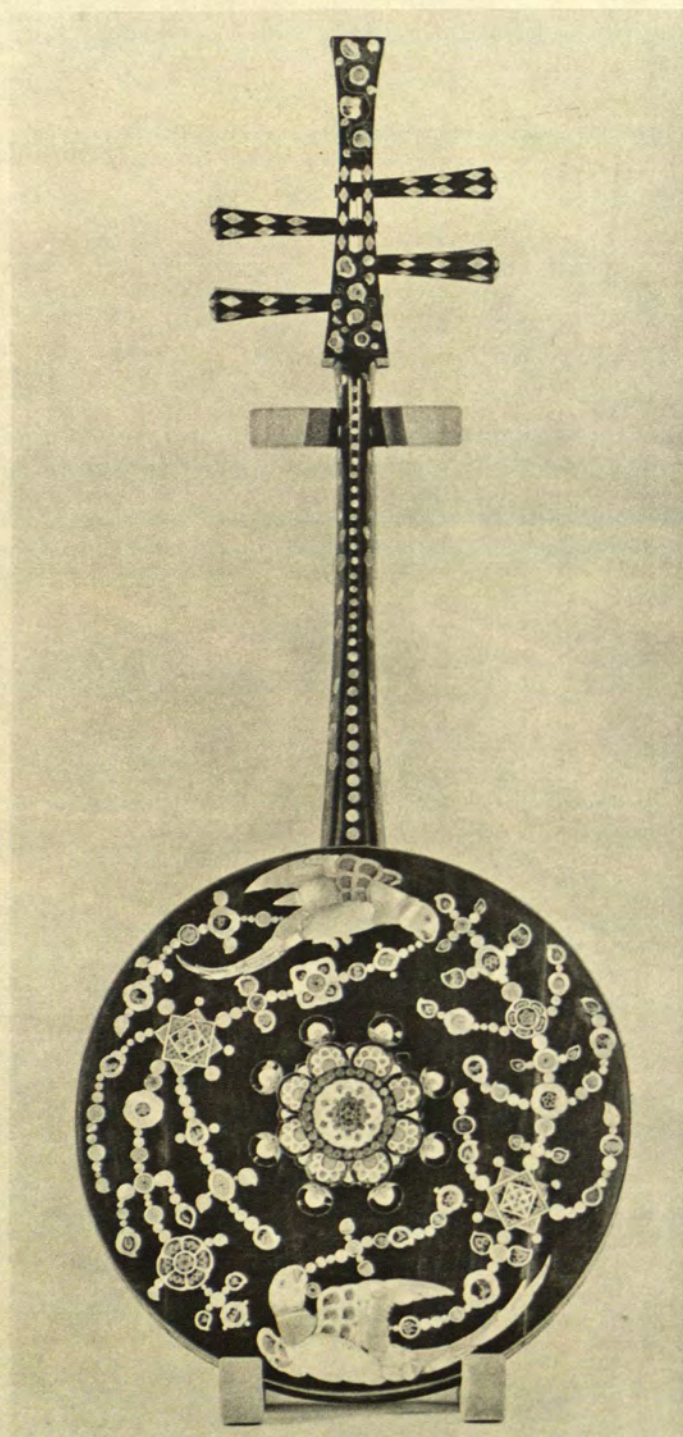
A highly functional form of construction called *azekura* was used in Japan for building warehouses. Thick, wedge-shaped logs were linked horizontally and layed one atop the other above the elevated floor, the structure thus having great strength and needing no internal walls. The powerful masculinity of these giant timbers of the Shōsō-in shares in the assertive spirit which permeated so much of the art of the Nara period.





76. FIVE-STRING BIWA, SHŌSŌ-IN • Eighth century • Overall length: 106.5 cm. (41.8 in.)

This exquisitely proportioned musical instrument is thought to have been brought from T'ang China. Inlaid like a mosaic with mother-of-pearl, tortoise shell, and amber, its flawless craftsmanship is worthy of an instrument used in the Imperial Palace. Perfectly preserved, this lute is a precious relic of the taste of the T'ang and Nara courts.



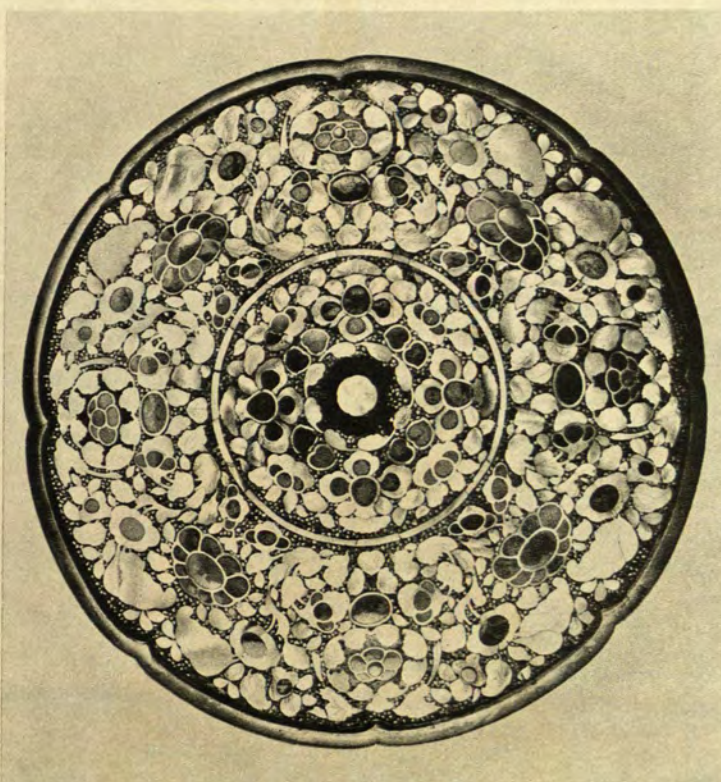
77. GENKAN, SHŌSŌ-IN • Eighth century • Overall length: 100.7 cm. (39.5 in.)

On the under side of the body are two charming parakeets holding strings of pearls in their beaks and seeming to revolve in a circular path. Inlaid into rose sandalwood, the iridescent mother-of-pearl was cut into different shapes and its surface delicately engraved; color was applied beneath the amber in order to enhance its translucence. The darkest areas in the flower and jewel patterns are inlaid tortoise shell.



78. LACQUERED EWER, SHŌSŌ-IN • Eighth century • Height: 41.3 cm. (16.2 in.)

Resembling at the top the head and neck of a bird, vessels in this shape were made in imitation of Iranian ware and greatly appealed to the love of the exotic among the T'ang Chinese. The decoration on the side is like that of a fine textile, with delicate cut gold and silver-leaf inlaid into the ground of black lacquer, depicting flowers in bloom, rare birds, and running animals. Luxury objects in the Shōsō-in display the almost unbelievable standard of skill and sensitivity attained by the craftsmen of East Asia.



79. MIRROR INLAID WITH MOTHER-OF-PEARL AND AMBER, SHŌSŌ-IN • Eighth century • Diameter: 32.7 cm. (12.8 in.)

Mirrors in ancient China were considered as more than functional objects; they had overtones of magic and were ornamented with the greatest care and respect. In the T'ang period, new and different materials were used for their decoration, and this colorful object reflects the sheer ebullience and prosperity of the times.



80. SILVER INCENSE BURNER, SHŌSŌ-IN • Eighth century • Diameter of the burner: 24.1 cm. (9.5 in.)

The court at Nara, assimilating Chinese culture with all its zeal, became literally intoxicated with expensive, exotic incense. Aromatic woods and many implements for burning them are found among the Shōsō-in treasure. This globular censer of pierced silver, for example, was used to perfume clothing and has an elaborate safety mechanism inside to keep the fire-plate horizontal.

81. NORTH CIRCULAR HALL (HOKU-EN-DŌ) • Kōfuku-ji • Thirteenth century

Builders of the Nara period took particular interest in the *endō* (literally, "circular hall"), structures which were in fact octagonal-shaped and of great visual richness. The original Hoku-en-dō at Kōfuku-ji was burned to the ground, but successive reconstructions were relatively faithful to the Nara tradition. The buildings of this temple, once among the richest and most elaborate in Japan, retain little of their former splendor, but something of the flavor of the ancient capital still lingers about this hall.



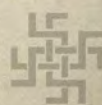
82. SOUTH CIRCULAR HALL (NANEN-DŌ) • Kōfuku-ji • Eighteenth century

Dedicated to the Bodhisattva Kannon, the Nanen-dō still has great popular religious appeal and is often crowded with devotees. Although built on ancient foundations, the building itself is of relatively recent vintage and is thus typical of Kōfuku-ji's current, rather forlorn condition. The canopy projecting from the front is an addition made to shelter large numbers of worshipers, reflecting thus the popularization in later centuries of a faith which was once aloof and remote from the masses.



83. ASHURA • Kōfuku-ji • Eighth century • ▷
Height: 153 cm. (60.1 in.)

Three faces and six arms show the supernatural power of this symbolic demon who has come under the authority of the Buddhist faith and serves as one of its guardians. The grotesqueness of its form does not seem unnatural, however, because it is counteracted by a spirit of humane realism present in the skillful use of the dry lacquer technique. One forgets that, iconographically, this is a wrathful and fierce deity, for its youthful faces and slender body have great personal charm.







84. SUBODAI (SUBHŪTI) • *Kōfuku-ji* • Eighth century • Height: 147 cm. (57.8 in.)

This statue is from a set of ten depicting the legendary disciples of the Buddha, and the expression of his face is almost that of childlike gentleness and ready wit. Modeled in dry lacquer, this and the remaining statues of the disciples at *Kōfuku-ji* are imbued with individual qualities of character and age, reflecting the great fascination which realism held for the artists of this century.

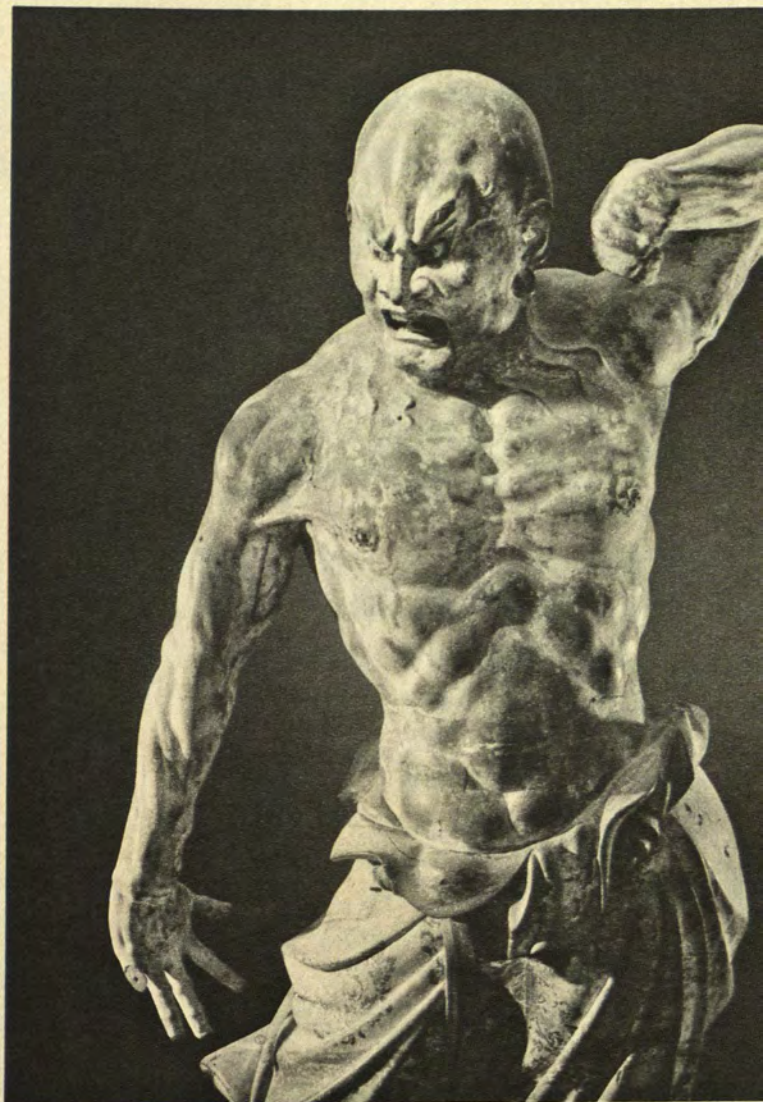


85. IMAGINARY PORTRAIT OF MUCHAKU (ASANGA) • *Kōfuku-ji* • Thirteenth century • Height of portrait: 193 cm. (75.9 in.)

When *Kōfuku-ji* was reconstructed following the burning and looting of the late twelfth century, the temple's workshops developed a new sculptural style which harmonized with the realism of the ancient statues still to be seen there and yet expressed the vitality of the new era. This portrait of the Indian theologian Asanga is far more monumental in scale and assertive in spirit than the statue of Subodai (Subhūti) above, nearly five hundred years older, but a spirit of descriptive realism nonetheless links them together.

86. KONGŌ RIKISHI, KŌFUKU-JI • *Thirteenth century* •
Height: 161.5 cm. (63.5 in.)

The realism and love of dynamic action in the arts of the Kamakura period are nowhere shown more clearly than in this one of a pair of wrath-filled guardians of a temple gateway. The half-nude body is an essay in the keenly observed effects of muscles stretched and twisted over the underlying skeletal structure, of the veins of the head and neck distended in anger, and of the torsions of a body animated by fierce energy.



87. IMAGINARY PORTRAIT OF SEISHIN (VĀSUBANDHU), KŌFUKU-JI • *Thirteenth century* • Height of portrait: 190 cm. (74.7 in.)

Made as a companion to the portrait of Asanga, there are marked differences in the bony structure of the heads, the facial features, hand gestures, and even the postures of the men—showing the acute powers of observation which underlay this style. The eyes, also, are inlaid with crystal, and the drapery hangs from the bodies with a sense of weight and gravity. The figures both have a bulk and massiveness which mold the air around them and enhance the feeling of a living presence.





89. SACRED DANCE AT THE KASUGA TAISHA

The *Yamato-mai* is an ancient folk dance believed to invoke the spirit of the land of the Yamato district. It is performed here in the open air, in a courtyard of spotless white gravel, the bright cinnabar and green colors of the shrine buildings serving as a background. Preserved by the shrine over the centuries, this austere, solemn dance is neither a restoration from the past nor a meaningless relic, but continues on as a quietly modest, living thing.

88. APPROACH PATH TO THE KASUGA SHRINE

Row upon row of stone lanterns crowd the sides of the path as it winds through the forest which surrounds the shrine. In ancient times, it was the custom to donate metal lanterns to be suspended along the corridors of the shrine itself, but with the passing of time, stone ones have been erected along the pathways as well. Pious donations by persons of all classes throughout the land, they have been given in such quantities that they take on the beauty of sculptural groups.





91. MAIN HALL, SHIN-YAKUSHI-JI • Eighth century

Located on a quiet hillside overlooking the southeast side of town, this *hondō* has retained the classical simplicity of a building of the Nara period. In the low pitch of its roof and modest scale, it has a reticence and lucidity of form which are sometimes overlooked in our awareness of the sumptuousness and ornamentalism of the age.



92. INTERIOR OF SHIN-YAKUSHI-JI

- ◁ 90. BASARA, ONE OF THE TWELVE GENERALS OF SHIN-YAKUSHI-JI • Eighth century • Height: 166.1 cm. (65.3 in.)

This face is one of the most expressive of the group. The cold clay has been brought to life and seems to pulsate with the hot blood of anger.

The large wooden statue of Yakushi Nyorai is seated in the center of the circular dais which is made simply of earth. The Twelve Divine Generals who encircle and protect him were modeled of clay, unbaked. Imbued with the realism of the age, each figure has his own distinct pose and gesture.



93. DETAIL OF COURT LADIES IN A GARDEN FROM AN ILLUSTRATED SUTRA • *Jōbon Rendai-ji*, Kyoto • Eighth century • Height: 26.4 cm. (10.3 in.), including text

This detail is from a handscroll illustrating the biography of Śākyamuni, founder of the Buddhist faith; and even though the events take place in India, the court ladies and garden pavilion are purely Chinese in manner. The painting was done in Nara, but

the style itself is very much that of the early T'ang period in China, the colors and composition having been simplified for the sake of the clarity of the subject matter. The legendary stories combined the qualities of a holy myth with those of a fairy tale and brought a human touch to the Buddhist creed, whose doctrines must have seemed strange and austere. Combining the illustrations with the text below, these works of early Japanese Buddhist art filled a most important role.

V. The Secluded Mountain Temples

■ In the latter half of the eighth century, ominous shadows fell over the capital at Nara, then at the height of its brilliant Buddhist culture. The lavish support of the faith had promoted a certain arrogance in members of the clergy who attained great influence over the throne. The intrusion of Buddhist monks into the structure of national political power alarmed many courtiers and strengthened the desire to move the seat of government away from the Nara temples. In A.D. 794, the capital was relocated some twenty-five miles to the northwest in Kyoto, then called the Heian-kyō, but unlike the previous transfer of the government from the Asuka district, the great Buddhist temples did not accompany the court. New sanctuaries were founded in the Heian-kyō proper, but the monasteries which were to be most representative of the esthetic and religious spirit of the new era were constructed high in the mountains, often in remote sites of great scenic grandeur.

A major cause of the corruption of Nara Buddhism was its pursuit of sheer physical splendor in such temples as Tōdai-ji or Kōfuku-ji. Theologically this was justified, but the dangers inherent in the situation were revealed by the relationship between the handsome and ambitious monk named Dōkyō and the Empress Shōtoku, daughter of Shōmu and Kōmyō, who rivaled her imperial parents in intense piety and gifts to the temples. Through years of court intrigue, she designated Dōkyō as a minister of the government and then as Chancellor, giving him vast authority in secular matters. Finally she bestowed on him a title which had been reserved only for members of the imperial family, Hō-ō or "Ruler in the Law," and openly schemed to abdicate the throne in his favor. She was resisted in this by the courtier Wake-no-Kiyomaro, who was tortured for his rashness and would have paid with his life had he not been protected by the Fujiwaras. In the monasteries were monks who also opposed this corruption of the faith and who attempted to escape from the atmosphere of the capital by founding sanctuaries in the remote mountains. One of the earliest was the establishment of the family temple of Wake-no-Kiyomaro on Mount Takao west of Kyoto, where it was renamed Jingo-ji and destined to become one of the leading centers of theology and art of medieval Japan. The building of temples in the mountains was also prompted by another factor: the sudden rise of Esoteric Buddhism as the dominant creed of the new era.

Esoteric Buddhism, called Mikkyō in Japan, was part of a widespread religious movement which became very powerful in India in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. and was brought by missionaries to China, where it quickly established itself. Called Tantrism in India, this movement actually embraced both the Buddhist and the Hindu creeds. It stressed the use of magical charms, incantations, ritual gestures, and special meditation in order to bring about states of religious exaltation. Buddhist Tantrism was considered an esoteric doctrine in the sense that its inner mysteries could be revealed only by a wise spiritual instructor to a small circle of initiates. This system organized the worship of a vast number of deities, some of them the traditional Bodhisattvas like Mañjuśrī or Avalokiteśvara who were symbols of spiritual powers—wisdom or compassion; others of them were newly devised to express the power or the mystery of the faith. This complex pantheon was conceived of as an emanation of the prime, creative principle of the universe, the Buddha Mahāvairocana; and a common feature of Tantric Buddhism came to be the mandala, a diagram in which the relationships between deities were outlined schematically, the center of the schema being reserved usually for the one of highest sacral value. In China the growth of Esoteric Buddhism was severely hampered by the anti-Buddhist persecutions of A.D. 845; in Japan its importation corresponded precisely with the need to reform the faith after the unhappy developments in Nara, and as a result, its impact upon the spiritual atmosphere of Japan and her arts became extremely strong. Under the influence of Hinduism, Mikkyō images were often given an uncanny, wild aspect with multiple arms and heads and ferocious expressions. Such tendencies had already appeared at the end of the Nara period, as in the many-armed Fukūkensaku Kannon (Amoghapāśa) at the Sangatsu-dō of Tōdai-ji; but these were forerunners of what was to come and not yet part of the organized theological system.

The sudden rise of the system in Japan was in large measure due to the efforts of two gifted monks, Kūkai (later given the name of Kōbō Daishi) and Saichō (Dengyō Daishi), who had returned from prolonged study in T'ang China, deeply learned in Esoteric doctrines. Saichō opened a seminary for the training of monks atop Mount Hiei, rising some 2,600 feet above Kyoto; Kūkai established one in the fastnesses of Mount Kōya in a remote section of Kii province. Both men had sought natural settings with an atmosphere of grandeur and mystery removed from worldly distractions; but the Buddhism of the time still retained the coloration of a national creed essential for the well-being of the state, and it maintained its connections with both the imperial court and the aristocracy. The court hastened to support the new sects in order, perhaps, to have them oppose the old Buddhist



institutions of Nara; and it might be said that the first steps in the degeneration of Esoteric Buddhism into a religion for the aristocracy took place during this early period.

The sudden rise of the Mikkyō sects in Japan produced great changes in the forms of traditional Buddhist art. For example, the strict symmetry in the layout of temple buildings was broken as the new monasteries were built in mountain settings in which there was little flat land. Also, the harmony of the buildings with giant trees surrounding them evoked a new sense of architectural beauty. Innovations appeared in the temple roofs, heretofore made of heavy, gray, rounded tiles in the Sino-Korean manner. In order to resist the extreme cold of the winters high in the mountains, roofs were made of cypress bark and shingles—a distinctly Japanese building technique paralleled by transformations taking place in the faith itself in Japan. Darkness and gloom prevailed within the ceremonial halls, a suitable atmosphere for mystic rites; moreover, the interiors were divided into two sanctums, an outer one for laymen, and an inner reserved for officiating monks only. Certain images were locked away in darkened tabernacles, to be shown only on rare occasions. Mystery and austerity had replaced the buoyant, ornate atmosphere of the Nara period. But most noticeable of all were the ferocious, even horrendous deities who took their place beside the tranquil images done in the earlier tradition, deities such as the Five Myō-ō (Radiant Kings), manifestations of the wrath of Mahāvairocana against either spiritual or physical harm. Strongly influenced by Hindu Tantrism, they expressed an intense, if controlled, anger, and added a dimension of irresistible authority to the rituals which they guarded.

The great changes in subject matter which occurred in painting and sculpture naturally affected their esthetic qualities as well. Realism was no longer important for the depiction of most supernatural beings, nor was sumptuous splendor appropriate for the incarnations of frightening mystic powers. The use of dry lacquer and unbaked clay in sculpture sharply declined, and wood, easily obtainable in the mountain forests, became the dominant medium. Huge, towering old trees evoke in the Japanese a sense of the sacred mystery of nature; and something of this essentially pagan spirit must have prompted the choice of massive blocks of wood for the sculpture of the time. The pictorial arts were subject to strict regulations in the iconography and coloring of the Mikkyō deities; free or willful expression by the painter was suppressed. Still preserved in the old Mikkyō temples are thousands of sketches and drawings by which the monk-artists perfected their mastery of these difficult regulations. The arts were not restricted by ceremonial limitations alone, for this was an age which reacted to the unbridled extravagance of the Daibutsu and other temple projects in Nara by building with relative economy. Both the new monasteries and their images were smaller in scale, with little of the colorful opulence which had prevailed up to then. Halls became simpler and more solemn, and a prominent place was given to the oddly shaped ritual implements used in the Esoteric system. A strong appeal was exerted by the blazing fires of the *Goma* ceremony—the ritual burning of faggots of wood inscribed with vows, the fire serving as a symbol of the wisdom which destroys obstacles to salvation. Tantric Buddhism in Japan was deeply colored with this kind of mysticism and sometimes lapsed into a religion of exorcism, abusing the purpose of its charms and magic, but a great many works of art remain from its early period that are filled with spiritual energy. It was, first of all, a time of reformation and renewal.

■ **THE ROAD TO JINGO-JI.** High on the flanks of Mount Takao to the north of Kyoto is the temple of Jingo-ji, originally built by Wake-no-Kiyomaro in a different locale where it was given the name Shingan-ji. Kiyomaro was one of the most loyal supporters of the imperial throne, and, taking advantage of the Dōkyō affair, had struck a crushing blow against the Nara Buddhists at the very depths of their corruption. In selecting a new site for the family temple far removed from human habitations, the sons of Wake were determined to break away from the secular atmosphere of the Nara temples. Here, the monk Saichō, just returned from T'ang China, performed in A.D. 805 the Esoteric ritual of baptism. In 810, Kūkai, also just come back from China, studied the "Sutra of the Benevolent Kings" (*Nimmō-kyō*). The rustic footpath leading to Jingo-ji, crossing the Kiyotaki River and winding up the steep slope, is in itself an important memorial, an appropriate starting point for an understanding of the new creed.

The main cult image of Jingo-ji is an imposing wooden statue of Yakushi Nyorai. It is not, strictly speaking, an Esoteric Buddhist icon, and it probably dates from the time of the original founding of the temple. Nonetheless, it was clearly an attempt to convey a sense of brooding spiritual awareness instead of external brilliance. After the temple had been made a center of the Shingon sect, however, a pagoda was built and equipped with statues of the Five Daikokūzō Bodhisattvas, Esoteric symbols of the five species of wisdom which lead to enlightenment. While these images possess stateliness and gravity, they are also imbued with a certain femininity which projects a sensual appeal and a strange, unaccountable beauty. Despite the abstruse nature of the deities, the sculptors were striving not simply for the occult or weird; they tried to attain the mystery which resides in beauty itself. Although not a single one of Jingo-ji's ancient buildings remains standing today, its historical role is well represented by its sculpture and painting. The statues of Yakushi and the Five Kokūzō Bodhisattvas stylistically demonstrate the transition from the Nara to the early Heian periods; iconographically they reflect the replacement of the older schools of Buddhism by the Esoteric ones. A pair of beautiful mandalas, painted in gold and silver on purple silk, are also preserved here, relics of Jingo-ji's early history.

■ TO KŌYA-SAN. The monk Kūkai, while living on Mount Takao, received permission from the Emperor Saga to proceed into the heart of Kii province, where in A.D. 816, he opened the principal seminary of the Shingon sect atop Mount Kōya. Far removed from both the new and the old capitals, the site was two thousand meters above sea level and sequestered amid gorges and dense forests of overpowering grandeur. Only a man of iron determination would have chosen so challenging a spot for a sanctuary and place of meditation. Over the centuries, in times of prosperity, the site has presented a grand spectacle with its array of halls and pagodas, but it has also suffered from countless fires and from its entanglement with political factions. Buddhist statues of the early Heian period which had adorned the *kondō*, for example, were tragically lost in a fire in 1931; however, the Lamp of the Law continues to burn here, and many precious objects still speak of its history. Said to have been brought back from China by Kūkai are gilt bronze ritual implements and a famous sword, the Kurikararyō (emblem of the deity Fudō), which evoke the memory of ancient ritual incantations of the sect. Many celebrated paintings remain, above all the ferocious one of the so-called Red Fudō with a background of blazing fire.

An understanding of the complex and profound doctrines of Esoteric creed was beyond the capacity of the masses, but the common people could nonetheless feel its power of salvation simply by coming to this sacred spot deep in the mountains. Kōya serves even today as a great pilgrimage center, and road markers erected for the guidance of the pilgrims of the past still stand here and there along the winding mountain trails. Thousands of large gravestones stand on either side of the road leading to the *oku-no-in*, the "inner precinct" where Kūkai lies buried. They were erected by proud men of power and authority whose ashes were brought here in hopes of an auspicious rebirth. Even those who were fierce enemies when alive are buried near one another, as though in recognition of the evanescence of human affairs, the larger vision of a mystical faith having released them from the bondage of their hatreds.

■ KANSHIN-JI IN KAWACHI, OSAKA PREFECTURE. Kanshin-ji is another of the old mountain temples which were taken over by an Esoteric sect. Refurbished by Kūkai and his chief disciple, Jikkei (A.D. 785-847), it possesses a remarkable statue thought to date from their time, Nyoirin Kannon (Avalokiteśvara), holding the Wheel of the Law and the priceless Jewel of Enlightenment. Stylistically, this statue bears many points of resemblance to those of the Five Daikokūzō Bodhisattvas at Jingo-ji, which must date from roughly the same period and must also have been carved according to directions bequeathed by Kūkai. Kanshin-ji has kept the statue as a secret image; its original coloring is preserved together with its strange esthetic unity, the result of the reconciliation of seemingly contradictory elements. Six-armed, the deity is supernatural in aspect, yet its body has a fullness and ripeness which are feminine and immediate. It is permeated with a feeling of static melancholy, but is also highly complex; and the result is an indefinable sense of occult beauty. Depicting a mystic concept in human form, it harbors a conflict of flesh and spirit which enables man to sense the dimensions of the unknown.

■ MURŌ-JI. Most of the mountain temples of the Mikkyō sects have suffered so badly from fire and earthquake that their character has changed, but Murō-ji is rare in that its buildings remain intact, more or less as they were in antiquity. Like Jingo-ji, it was a temple of the late Nara period which was absorbed by the Shingon sect. To this spot had come monks who were abandoning the urban Buddhism of Nara. Penetrating their way deep into these mountains, they sought to discipline themselves, to forego the comforts and distractions of the capital, and to obtain the full spiritual powers of the Law. According to one legend, Murō-ji was begun by the mysterious En-no-Gyōja, a wandering ascetic and miracle worker of the late seventh century; and it would have been entirely fitting to convert this temple into a Mikkyō sanctuary for the performance of occult rituals.

The road to Murō-ji, threading its way along a mountain stream, is an avenue of seclusion and quiet. At the entrance to this long ravine is a large image of Miroku (Maitreya) Buddha engraved on the face of the cliff. Dating from the Kamakura period, it is a rare example in Japan of the colossal rock-cut Buddhist statues which mark the spread of the religion from India through Central Asia and China and is reminiscent of the colossi of Bamiyan, Kizil, Yun-kang, and Lung-men. From early times, Murō-ji was a popular pilgrimage center, for it admitted women into its precincts. Because holy Kōya-san, faintly visible in the distance, sternly prohibited them from entering the mountains in the belief that they polluted its soil, Murō-ji came to be known as "the Kōya for women." Crossing the bridge over the Murō River and winding up the steep slopes of the mountain, one finds the temple halls irregularly arranged, each built to take advantage of a narrow stretch of level ground. Their scale is quite small and compact, different in spirit from most other temples; their shingle roofs slope in a gentle curve with a grace that is almost feminine.

The interior of the *kondō* also preserves the character of an ancient mountain temple of the Esoteric sect. Divided into an inner and outer sanctum, the inner portion is bathed in darkness as the sunlight is softened and filtered by the towering cryptomeria trees. Such seclusion and gloom can stimulate the fantasies of a faith of incantation and charms; but despite this atmosphere, there is not a single ferocious Tantric image, nor is there an admixture into the sculptural style of the sensual beauty seen, for example, at Kanshin-ji. The main cult image of the *kondō* is that of Śākyamuni standing in the

center; to the left are Yakushi and the Bodhisattva Jizō (Kshitigarbha); to the right are the Bodhisattvas Monju (Mañjuśrī) and the Eleven-Headed Kannon, each backed by a beautifully painted halo. The sturdy, masculine spirit of the carvings is reminiscent of the wooden figures at Tōshōdai-ji, due perhaps to the fact that Murō-ji is near Nara, where, in the late eighth century, distinct Esoteric tendencies in sculpture began to appear. There is not the slightest concern for realism in these statues; instead, a distinct linear quality shows how the sculptors sought for the beauty of repeated rhythmical lines of the garment folds, carved in shallow relief. In the sharply ridged chisel marks, there is a freshness indicative of a new awakening in wood sculpture. These characteristics are shown clearly in the superlative seated Buddha image in the Miroku-dō (Maitreya Hall), imbued with the solemnity and gravity which can be achieved only in wood sculpture. As it entered into the mountains in search of a mystic atmosphere, Esoteric Buddhism discovered anew the expressive beauty of wood carving.

At the rear of the inner sanctum of the *kondō* is a wooden wall painted with a brightly colored composition called the Taishaku Mandara, a mandala of the Indian deity Indra in his role as lord of rainfall. This, together with the painted halos, is worthy of attention, for although it retains something of the pursuit of opulent splendor of Buddhist arts of the Nara period, the brightness of that period had already been replaced by a gloomier, more reserved atmosphere of Esoterism. But even after the Mikkyō sects had escaped into the mountain fastnesses, its arts retained traces of the styles of the past, and its seminaries remained in contact with the secular world.

■ THE TEMPLE OF ENRYAKU-JI ON HIEI-ZAN. The Tendai sect was part of the movement of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan, but it differed in some respects from the Shingon sect of Kūkai. The latter was of recent origin and strongly touched by fresh Indian influences; the Tendai sect was older and had been formed by Chinese monks in an effort to unify and harmonize a variety of Buddhist schools, including the Esoteric. Kōya-san was a great distance from the capital, whereas Enryaku-ji, the main Tendai sanctuary atop Mount Hiei, while still a mountain retreat, nonetheless looked down upon the Imperial Palace and the city of Kyoto spread at its feet. In another direction, it overlooked Lake Biwa and the city of Ōtsu. The activities and anxieties of the world below were rapidly transmitted to Mount Hiei; even monks engaged in austerities were unable to remain indifferent to them, and yet, theologically, one of the characteristics of the Tendai sect was an attitude of impartiality toward worldly struggles in order that it might serve and save mankind. In contrast to the single-minded concern of the Shingon sect, which saw itself as the beginning and end of Esoteric Buddhism, Tendai had a broader vision. A number of other schools branched off from it: the Pure Land sect, which stressed the doctrine of salvation in Paradise; the Zen sect, which emphasized the act of meditation; and the Nichiren sect. That the philosophy of the Tendai sect as established by Saichō was comprehensive enough to include these other viewpoints does not indicate that it was impure as an Esoteric school. Rather it shows the degree of enthusiasm with which Saichō himself marshaled the forces of latter-day theology against the older Buddhist views. In this respect, Enryaku-ji became a cradle of the newer forms of Buddhism in Japan; it was also a seedbed for the growth of new forms of Buddhist arts and crafts. But there was something in the atmosphere of Hiei-zan which kindled the passions of youthful monks still attached to the world. Unable to remain aloof, they often became entangled in the violent political arguments of the city below. The temple warriors, impetuous and aggressive, were often an annoyance to the secular authorities, and invited that ultimate, tragic denouement of 1571, when Oda Nobunaga burned all the temple buildings on the mountain and caused the mass slaughter of almost three thousand persons. As a result, few buildings or works of art remain to testify to the temple's past; but just as the spirit of the Tendai sect was given a new life in other sects, so works of art made for use here have been discovered elsewhere. The most celebrated example is the giant painting of the "Descent of Amitābha and his Host" now displayed on Kōya-san but originally kept at Enryaku-ji.

The Komponchū-dō atop Mt. Hiei is the main hall of Enryaku-ji. It was rebuilt following a fire of 1642, but the old building system was closely preserved. This impressive structure, a skillful Japanese adaptation of Chinese building forms, has a corridor which encloses the forecourt and resembles in this way the layout of the Shishin-den of the Kyoto Imperial Palace. This resemblance may have been intentional, for Saichō, a strong patriot, had originally conceived of the temple as a center for the protection of the Empire—both spiritually and physically. The great mountain mass of Hiei-zan itself was thought to shield the capital from the malevolent forces which, in the Chinese cosmological scheme, flow from the northeast. There are many other temple halls strung out along the ridges of the mountain, but the ethos of the ancient days of prosperity is largely gone. A metal sutra box plated in gold and silver was found near the ruins of an old hall in the north precinct, and its very exquisiteness sharpens our awareness of how much has been lost. It had been intentionally buried containing scrolls of the *Lotus Sutra* which had been copied by the Lady Jōtōmonin, consort of the Emperor Ichijō. The aristocracy of Kyoto were greatly devoted to Enryaku-ji and injected a rather humane quality into the austere and esoteric mood of the Tendai creed there.



94. THE PATH TO JINGO-JI

Jingo-ji stands on the slopes of Mount Takao, a few miles northwest of Kyoto in a mountain district celebrated for its brilliant foliage in the autumn. This footpath crosses the mountain torrent in a narrow ravine and then winds up the steep slope to the temple. The path is actually older than the streets of Kyoto, for it was opened by monks in search of a secluded place for meditation even before the founding of the capital.





96. YAKUSHI NYORAI (DETAIL)

This powerful head has a strong sense of tension, as though the volume were expanding from an internal pressure. The sculptor seems purposely to have avoided superficial grace and illusionism in his attempt to achieve a more resolute, determined feeling of spiritual power. Dating from the time when a mood of reform was gathering within the imperial court and the Buddhist faith itself, its austerity is symptomatic of the drastic changes in Japanese cultural life that resulted in the moving of the capital and the rise of the Esoteric sects.

◁ 95. YAKUSHI NYORAI, JINGO-JI • *Late eighth century* •
Height: 169.7 cm. (66.7 in.)

This solemn figure combines a sense of spiritual energy with a ponderous physical presence. The folds of the robe around the waist and between the hips have a rhythmic, abstract beauty far removed from realistic description. Carved from a single block of cypress, it was left unpainted except for slight coloring in the eyes and lips. In the design of the drapery and in its powerful plasticity, it was influenced by Indian Buddhist sculpture whose style was transmitted (with appropriate changes) through T'ang China.



97. RENGE KOKŪZŌ BODHISATTVA, JINGO-JI • *Mid-ninth century*

The head is a taut, compressed form whose face harbors a sense of profound concentration. The half-closed eyes, narrow and elongated, are highly abstract shapes which respond to the geometric curves of the brows and the pursed lips. While this figure lacks multiple arms or heads as attributes of its divinity, it surpasses the beauty of ordinary mortals and embodies an awareness of the realms of mystery unique to Esoteric Buddhism.

98. THE FIVE GREAT KOKŪZŌ BODHISATTVAS, JINGO-JI • *Mid-ninth century • Height: 96.4 cm. (37.9 in.)*

Closely resembling each other, differing only in body color and symbolic implements, the five Bodhisattvas are arrayed in mute silence, linked in mutual rapport. The expression of deep composure and the sense of volume of the opulent bodies is so convincing that we are less aware of the technique of the gifted sculptors than of the convincing presence of these embodiments of divine wisdom.





99. KŌYA-SAN

According to legend, this domain deep in the mountains was discovered by Kōbō Daishi (Kūkai) with the aid of an old hunter. With the same indomitable spirit by which he mastered the complex mysteries of the Esoteric creed, Kūkai erected this sanctuary in a primeval forest. Dozens of sub-temples and smaller compounds are set in the thick woods; and even though fires have destroyed many of the old buildings, Kōya-san still remains a great bastion of the Buddhist faith.



100. RITUAL IMPLEMENTS OF ESOTERIC BUDDHISM

• Five-prong vajra bell: 23.5 cm. (9.2 in.); single-prong vajra: 25 cm. (9.8 in.); three-prong vajra: 24 cm. (9.4 in.); five-prong vajra: 23 cm. (9.05 in.)

Patterned after ancient Indian weapons, ritual implements of this kind are a unique feature of Esoteric Buddhism. They are used in the ceremonial exorcism of evil, both physical and spiritual, and their varied shapes are permeated with elaborate symbolic overtones. These particular objects, preserved at Kōya-san, are said to have been brought back from T'ang China by Kūkai.



101. DESCENT OF AMIDA AND HIS HEAVENLY HOST

• Late eleventh or early twelfth century • Kōya-san, Reihō-kan
• Center: 210.8 × 210.6 cm. (82.2 × 82.1 in.); right: 211.2 × 106 cm. (82.3 × 41.3 in.); left: 210.8 × 105.7 cm. (82.2 × 41.2 in.)

This great triptych, nearly fourteen feet in width, is a most monumental expression of the belief that Amida will approach the earth to receive the spirit of one who has died with the Buddha's name on his lips. The composition is dominated in the center by the figure of Amida, depicted with gold paint and *kirikane*; before him kneel his attendant Bodhisattvas, Kannon and Seishi, the former holding a lotus pedestal upon which to receive the spirit to be reborn in Paradise. Like the Raigō scenes of the Phoenix Hall in Uji (Figure 139), which are somewhat older, this work is at once faithful to the ancient tradition of hieratic Buddhist art but also an expression of new developments in Japanese esthetic taste. The composition is symmetrical; the faces and bodies are idealized, and yet the symmetry is by no means perfect. Inventiveness is shown in the placement of the figures, both laterally and in depth; the trailing edges of the clouds impart a sense of sinuous movement; and the color scheme, keyed to the iridescent pinks of the flesh tones and accented by patches of strong color and *kirikane*, imbues this vast theophany with a dream-like aura which was so much a part of the religious atmosphere of the day.



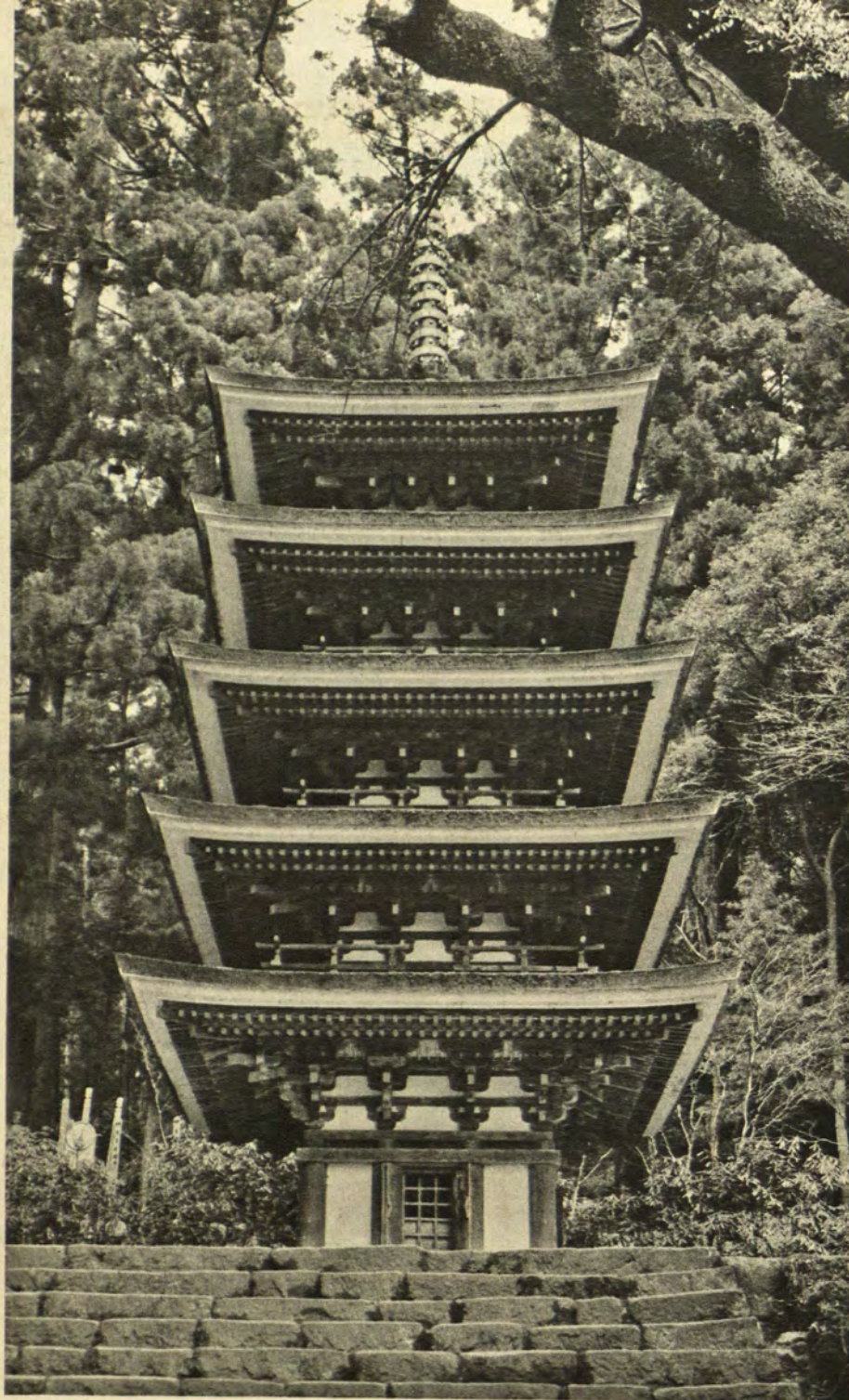
102. NYOIRIN KANNON, KANSHIN-JI • Ninth century •
Height: 108.8 cm. (42.8 in.)

For centuries this has been kept as a secret image; it is rarely shown even today. Hence its color is well preserved, especially over the torso where the pink is almost iridescent, like mother-of-pearl. Despite the supernatural aspect of its six arms, it has a certain voluptuous, feminine charm; however, the withdrawn expression of the face—the eyes half-closed in inner concentration—reinforces the static dignity and solemnity of this Esoteric Buddhist icon.

103. THE ROCK-CUT BUDDHA IMAGE AT ŌNO • Thirteenth century

Unlike Kōya-san, which forbade the presence of women, the smaller sanctuary at Murō-ji welcomed them and became, in its own right, a popular pilgrimage center. This large image of Maitreya Buddha, nearly forty-six feet high, was engraved on the face of the cliff overlooking the mountain stream and road which lead to the temple a mile or so away. Unlike the sculptural, rock-cut Buddhas of India and China, this is done in a delicate line engraving—actually the transference of a pictorial concept onto stone.



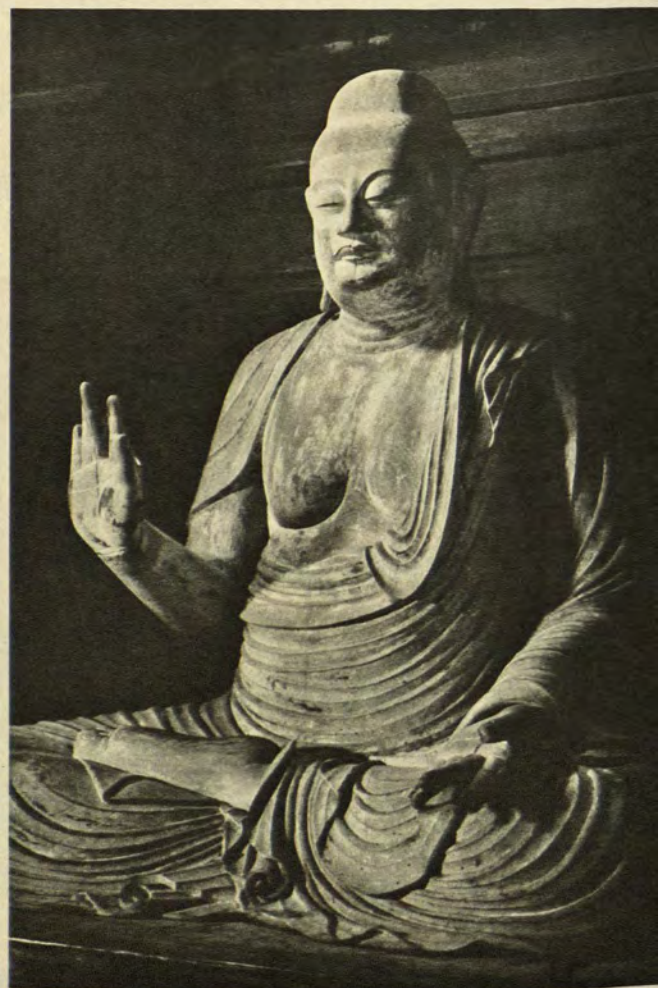


104. FIVE-STORY PAGODA • Murō-ji •
Late eighth or early ninth century • Total
height: 16.2 m. (53.2 ft.); square: 2.48 m.
(8.1 ft.)

Utilizing the few small areas of flat land on the steep hillside, the buildings of Murō-ji are modest in scale. This pagoda is virtually a model in its diminutive size, having a delicacy which is enhanced all the more by the mighty cryptomeria cedars which enclose it.

105. SEATED BUDDHA • Murō-ji • Ninth
century • Height: 105.7 cm. (41.5 in.)

Marks of the sculptor's chisel are clearly visible over the surface of this powerful figure. Strokes which are alternately narrow and wide overlap each other and add their rhythms to the larger patterns of the garment folds which give so strong a sense of movement to the whole—movements, however, which occasionally eddy into the small vortex shapes of the hem. The plaster hair-curls and surface paint have long since flaked away, leaving this statue in its quintessential state as one of the noblest, most distinctively Japanese of all Buddha images.





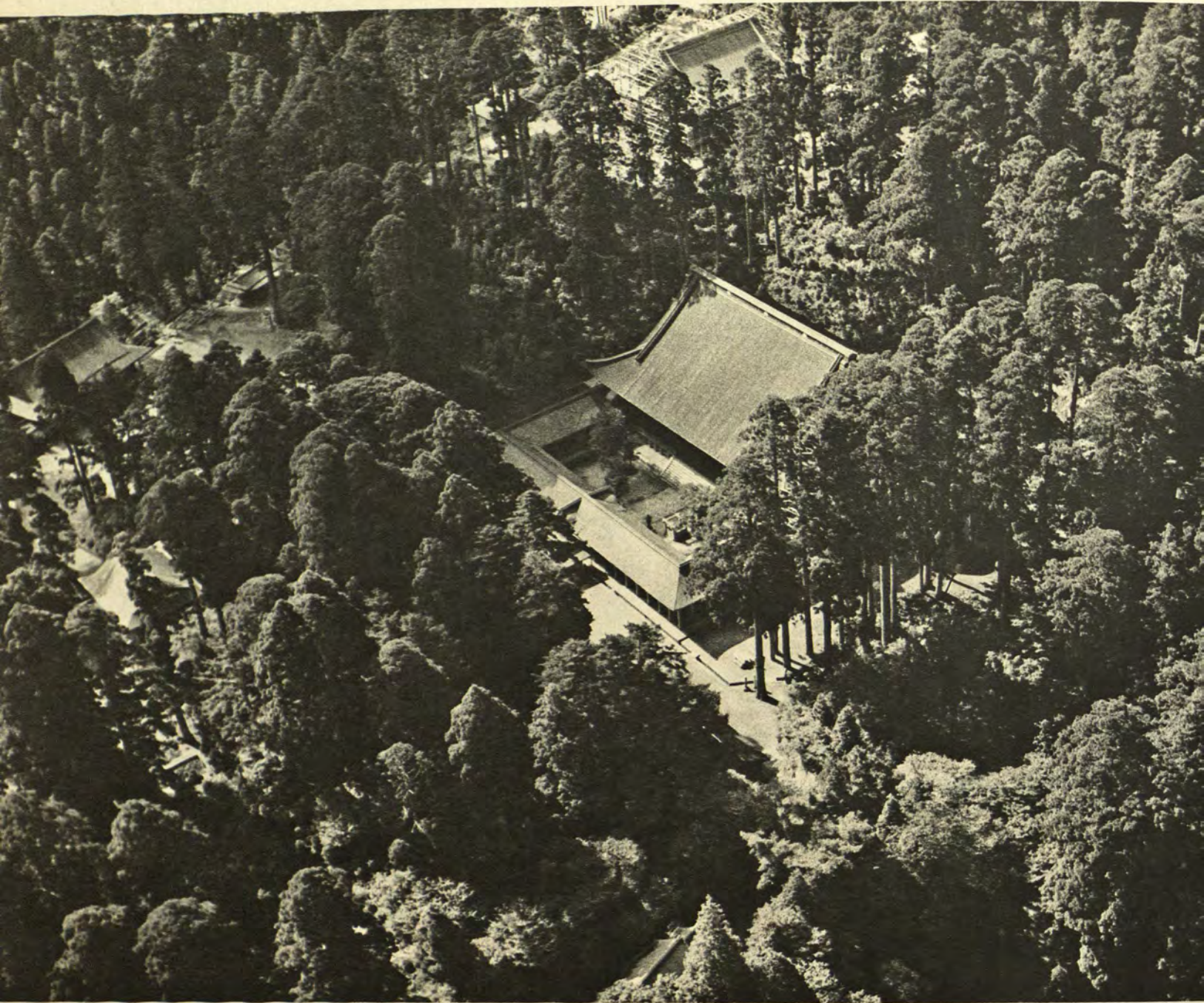
106. *KONDŌ, MURŌ-JI • Ninth century • Width of facade and side: 9.1 m. (29.8 ft.) each*

The care with which the narrow site has been utilized is shown by the way the building projects forward on its stilt-like foundations. A sense of unity between the structure and the natural beauty of its site is shown in the use of stone in the retaining walls and stairs, the softness of the cedar-shingle roof, and in the faded paint of the wooden boards and pillars.



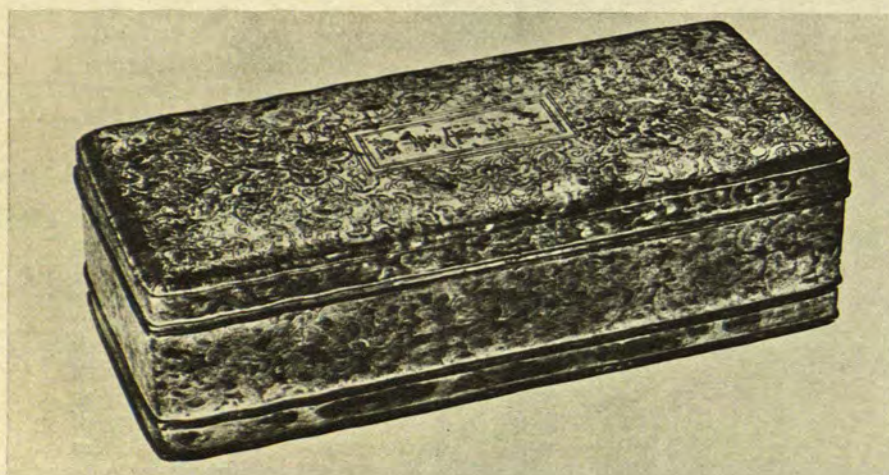
107. *INNER SANCTUM OF THE KONDŌ, MURŌ-JI • Height of Sākyamuni Buddha: 238 cm. (93.5 in.)*

Within the narrow confines of the inner sanctum stands a forest of large, solemn statues of the ninth century. Before them are the small, flamboyant statues of the Twelve Divine Generals dating from the Kamakura period. The wooden back wall is painted with a mandala of the god Indra in his role as lord of rainfall. The coloring of this and the flat wooden halos is reserved and austere.



108. THE KONPONCHŪ-DŌ OF ENRYAKU-JI

Enryaku-ji was founded by Saichō as a center for the training of monks in the Tendai creed and for the performance of rituals to protect the nation and its sovereign. For this reason, perhaps, this main ceremonial hall with its enclosed forecourt resembles the layout of the audience hall of the Imperial Palace, the Shishinden (see Figure 115). The Konponchū-dō is sheltered in a wooded ravine below the summit of Mount Hiei, which offers a breathtaking panorama of the city of Kyoto and the great Kinki Plain.



109. A SUTRA BOX IN GILT BRONZE •
Eleventh century • Length: 27.1 cm. (10.6 in.); width: 12.1 cm. (4.7 in.); height: 8.3 cm. (3.2 in.)

This box was found in a protective bronze outer case on Mt. Hiei, where it had been intentionally buried in order to transmit the *Lotus Sutra* to future generations. Its decor of delicately engraved floral arabesques is enhanced by the patterns of gold inlaid on silver. In the central cartouche is inscribed the name of the sutra. The rounded edges of the lid counteract any feeling of harshness from the metal itself and enhance the sense of aristocratic gentleness and grace.

VI. In and Around the Heian Capital

■ In A.D. 784, the court was moved from Nara to Nagaoka in the province of Yamashiro, only a few miles southwest of modern Kyoto. But for reasons not entirely clear, the building of the new capital did not progress smoothly, and in 793 it was moved again, this time to the site of Kyoto itself, which was given the name of Heian-kyō ("Capital of Peace and Tranquility"). The seat of government had been in Nara for only seventy years, and it was most unlikely that the new one would remain in Kyoto for over a thousand. It remained, however, not because the city was easily defended or the affairs of its people were always tranquil, but because a culture distinctively Japanese in spirit began to develop there, spontaneously and easily. Let us trace the outlines of this culture as it flourished in and around the sprawling new city.

■ TŌJI. A large monastery, popularly called Tōji ("East Temple"), was built at the time of the founding of Heian-kyō. It was one of the two official temples located just inside the Rashōmon, the great south entry gate to the city, and on either side of the north-south avenue which bisected the town. Tōji's importance was reflected in its formal name, the Kyō-ō-Gokoku-ji ("Temple of the Protection of the Land through the Noble Law"); in A.D. 823, it was entrusted to Kūkai, who made it one of the basic seminaries of the Shingon sect. Kūkai had already founded the secluded monastery atop Kōya-san, but he retained not only this one foothold in the new capital; he was also given control of several of the temples of Nara. This was due both to the genius of the man, for Kūkai was one of the most gifted figures in all Buddhist history, and also to the appeal of Esoteric Buddhism, newly introduced, which offered control over supernatural forces, profound and mysterious. At Tōji, the most impressive relic remaining today is the lecture hall, whose long image platform is furnished with twenty-one statues arranged according to the schematic layout of a mandala. These served as cult objects of an elaborate ceremony performed often during the second quarter of the ninth century which promoted the well-being and safety of the nation. In the group of five wrath-filled deities stationed in the western sector of the platform, some of the special esthetic innovations of Esoteric Buddhism can be seen most clearly. Up to this time, the arts of the Mikkyō sects had imparted a sense of mystery stemming from an unseen world, but these wrathful figures project such ferocious energy that the spectator is repelled from any thought of questioning or challenging the realm which they guard.

The Esoteric schools discovered that conversions among the masses were more easily made through displays of this sort, which brought a feeling of submission to irresistible power, than through theoretical argument and persuasion. From this time on, cult images of ferocious appearance were made in great quantities, and this popular aspect of Mikkyō, its latest and least demanding development, degenerated into little more than a religion of prayers and charms. Moreover, a contradictory situation in the realm of the arts was soon encountered, for without a realistic style, it is difficult to create a convincing impression of frightening powers. The arts of Mikkyō, however, had already discarded illusionism of the sort seen in the Nara and T'ang periods, and had begun to move in other directions. As a result, some of the later attempts to depict anger and wrath were unconvincing and even humorous in feeling. Fortunately, however, at the time the statues of the Tōji lecture hall were carved, the techniques of illusionism had not been totally lost; even the thin lacquer which was used to coat the wood was suitable to realistic modeling, and these statues may be taken as most expressive of the ferocious aspect of Esoteric Buddhism.

■ IMAGES OF SHINTO DEITIES. A fusion of Buddhism and the native Shinto creed had been promoted throughout the eighth century. During the ninth, as artists of the Mikkyō temples were seeking to imbue their images with a sense of supernatural power, wooden statues of the native gods having their own distinct aura of mystery began to be made. Examples of these are preserved in Yakushi-ji in Nara and in Tōji, and some of the most splendid early figures are in the Matsuo Shrine in Kyoto. These were probably made by the same craftsmen who carved Buddhist statues, which is to say that at the time, temples and shrines were closely linked; both Tōji and Yakushi-ji, for example, had a shrine dedicated to Hachiman, the war-god, within their precincts. The Matsuo Shrine was closely connected with Kōryū-ji, an ancient temple not far away along the western outskirts of Kyoto, yet the sculptors took great pains to provide the Shinto figures with a feeling of authority quite different from that of the Buddhist images. First of all, the gods were dressed in Japanese-style garments, and not the slightest touch of the eccentric or grotesque was allowed. In trying to suggest their divinity, the sculptors sought for a dignity and solemnity in the native Japanese tradition, for throughout the

Heian period in the capital city, the national spirit in the arts was being carefully cultivated. Another basic example is the Kyoto Imperial Palace.

■ **THE KYOTO IMPERIAL PALACE.** The Heian capital was planned around a vast enclosed area called the Daidairi (literally, the “great inner interior”), the ceremonial and administrative seat of government. The Imperial Palace as it stands today dates only from the Edo period, but it was built in emulation of the sector of the ancient Daidairi given over to the imperial residence, and was based on careful antiquarian research. Two of the other main sectors, however, were not reconstructed. One of these was the Chōdō-in, which housed the original Throne Hall and the Departments of State. (This has been partially reproduced on a smaller scale in the modern Heian Shrine in Kyoto.) The other was the Buraku-in, used for banquets, Buddhist and Shinto ceremonies, and the like. The heart of the modern Palace is the Shishin-den, which now serves as the Throne Hall, and the Seiryō-den, the Emperor’s residence chambers. A great number of other structures make up this compound, many of which are joined together by a complex system of corridors; but when the corridors were dismantled as a precaution against fire during the Second World War, the distinctive beauty of these buildings could be seen more clearly. The two main buildings today, as careful reproductions of the ancient residential quarters, are made of plain, unpainted wood and roofed with cypress bark shingles, whereas the original Chōdō-in and Buraku-in were built in the much more colorful Chinese style with tile roofs. The severely plain buildings nonetheless have an air of quiet dignity and solemnity fitting their role in state symbolism. Like the statues of the Shinto gods, they are imbued with the spartan simplicity and respect for natural materials which are so esteemed in traditional Japanese taste. This taste, however, became increasingly complex during the Heian period, as courtiers took up artistic and literary pursuits with great zeal. In particular, when the Chancellor Fujiwara Michinaga was at the height of his influence in the second and third decades of the eleventh century, he brought a number of gifted women into the court, the foremost of whom was the Lady Murasaki Shikibu. Around such women, a distinct court culture rapidly grew up, of which narrative tales of amorous intrigue were a major form of expression, and the romantic novel, the *Genji Monogatari*, was its greatest example. These stories were usually written in an exquisite hand in the native Japanese *kana* alphabet, using a minimum of Chinese characters. There also developed the custom of inserting illustrations alongside sections of the script, and in this way the special form of painting called *emakimono* (illustrated handscroll) came into great popularity.

During the Nara period, Japanese painters had been under strong Chinese influence. Not only did the painters copy T’ang pictorial techniques, they depicted Chinese landscapes, history, and customs—which were welcome at this time when exotic things were so much in fashion. In the growth of national self-consciousness in the Heian period, however, the Chinese manner was no longer satisfactory, and a pictorial style better suited to Japanese customs and scenery was developed. Encouragement came from the traditions of a native style of court poetry called *waka*, as well as from the rise of the new romantic tales. The history of the *Waka* goes far back in time; originally it was a very simple and bold form of expression in the manner of the poems of the *Man’yōshū*. During the Heian period, this idiom was greatly polished and refined, and its subjects used for illustrations on screens and sliding doors in the apartments of the well-born, who delighted in being immersed in a poetic atmosphere. Similarly, the narrative tales which so beguiled the courtiers were given many purely poetic, evocative passages which were only incidental to the unfolding of the main plot. The painted illustrations of the stories captured the spirit of these passages in the color schemes and in secondary details. Thus, the distinctly Japanese style of painting called *Yamato-e* came into being, and the style which had prevailed until then was given the name of *Kara-e* (Chinese painting). As the *Yamato-e* developed, its emotional range became very wide, capable of moving from an atmosphere of quiet and strong sentiment to one of exceedingly dynamic, excited events. These long horizontal paintings, the *emakimono*, are sometimes said to be peculiarly Japanese in form, but similar scrolls had been made by the Chinese as well. The local innovations appear in the manner by which the texts and paintings were interrelated, with subtle hints in the text of themes to be elaborated in the illustrations, and vice versa. Gradually, the *Yamato-e* style was able to express with delicate nuances the emotions of love and loneliness and grief, or those of excited events—wars or rebellion.

■ **THE DEVELOPMENT OF NARRATIVE SCROLL PAINTING.** The life of the courtiers in the Heian-kyō, for all their opulence and power, was pervaded by an extraordinary mood of melancholy and pathos, a sense of the tragedy inherent in human fate, the evanescence of glory, and the fragility of beauty. This mood, given the name *aware* or *mono no aware*, was captured most eloquently by Lady Murasaki’s classic novel, the *Genji Monogatari*, and by the oldest known illustrated version of it, which dates from the early twelfth century. To depict the many episodes of the novel which take place indoors, the painters employed an artistic device of looking down into a chamber from a high vantage point, as though there were no roof or ceiling—a bold, exaggerated use of the Chinese perspective system. For emotional effect, they manipulated color harmonies in subtle ways, making unexpected combinations of soft, pastel tints in thick coats of pigment. The painters also were fascinated by the interplay of lines and compositional patterns which are so abstract and intricate that they are sometimes difficult to identify at first glance. The faces of people were drawn with little regard for indivi-

duality, using standardized hooked noses and a simple horizontal line for the eyes, thus freeing the spectator to imagine the emotional states of the subjects—one of the several ways by which the *Yamato-e* dealt with the implications of literary themes.

In contrast to this, the scroll painting of the *Shigisan Engi* depicts the amazing tale of a virtuous monk named Myōren, who could invoke supernatural forces through the power of his faith. But rather than present the realm of divine mysteries, the artist showed in an amusing fashion the reactions of people to miraculous affairs and unfolded the plot in a leisurely, diverting way. Unlike the painters of the *Genji* scrolls, he depicted the exteriors of buildings and, for the most part, earthy peasants and commoners. In keeping with the rapid action in the story, his painting technique was lively and animated. He also included scenes of deftly colored trees and herds of wandering deer, a pastoral touch not essential to the story itself, but one which reveals much of the broad, poetic atmosphere of the Heian period. These scenes of rustic life and common people were filled with a droll, dynamic spirit often given the name *okashi*; this was in sharp contrast to the atmosphere of *aware* which grew up in the arts of the Heian court—introverted, static, and pensive.

A middle ground between these two points of view is occupied by the *Bandainagon Ekotoba*, a set of three scrolls which unfold a story of arson and intrigue in the burning of one of the gates of the Imperial Palace. The life of the aristocracy is recorded in interior scenes, whereas the common folk are shown openly and frankly in other sections; and there is a skillful combination of both static and dynamic compositions. The feelings of the spectator are drawn between moods of sorrow and humor—one group of people is shown rejoicing openly at the false accusation of the crime, but Bandainagon's family is shown in hopeless despair at the discovery of the evil deed and their own ruin. These scenes are composed with extraordinary skill; and their sensitive insight into human psychology is a priceless document of the emotions of the men of the Heian capital.

■ ILLUMINATED SUTRAS AND ANTHOLOGIES OF POEMS. The courtiers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were patrons and practitioners not merely of painting alone. They eagerly sought ornamented sutras and collections of poems written in the most refined styles of calligraphy. The copying of the *Lotus Sutra* (*Hokke-kyō*) became extremely popular, for it was believed that in this era of the decline of the Buddhist Law, salvation could be approached through the merits of simply copying this one text, which was thought to epitomize all the teachings of the Buddha, and depositing the copies for the sake of later generations. The religious merit of the deed was heightened by the sheer physical beauty of the scrolls, which became so ornate that they were sometimes confused with secular poems. Religious conviction inspired these patrons, but so also did their addiction to ornate beauty. Among the most interesting examples of this are the copies of the *Lotus Sutra* donated to Shitenō-ji in Osaka. Portions of the sutra were written on paper used to cover fans and then bound into albums. These were illustrated with paintings or hand tinted woodblock prints of scenes of daily life, and were donated by ladies of the court who had copied out text. The same temple also preserves the amulet-covers which had hung from the necks of high-born ladies, each made of rich brocade and embellished with delicate fittings of gilded silver, further proof of the degree to which faith and beauty had mingled in daily life.

■ THE APPEAL OF LACQUER WARE. The courtiers of the new capital also became inordinately fond of lacquer work. The craft of coating boxes, tables, or the like with colorful designs had been transmitted from the continent during the Nara period, when the usual method had been to inlay patterns of gold or silver leaf and mother-of-pearl onto a dark lacquer ground. Largely as a substitute for this, the technique called *maki-e* developed in the Heian period. Powdered gold, silver, or copper was applied in a number of ways to the lacquer ground, usually to form a stylized picture. A purely Japanese development, this rather florid use of precious metal and the softness of outline in the designs caught the fancy of the Heian aristocracy, who had almost all of their utensils of everyday living decorated in this expensive way; for not only did they seek beauty in their lives, they had the resources with which to obtain it. Typical of this taste is the small box illustrated in Figure 124, made merely to keep small objects, such as cosmetics, but decorated with utmost refinement. The design motif is that of the wheels of bullock carts being set into a river to absorb moisture to prevent warping and cracking, a thing frequently seen along the streams of the capital. The appearance of so poetic and yet casual a theme is typical of the period and of the sentiments which pervade the native cultural tradition of the Japanese—lodged in the hearts not only of poets and painters, but of the people at large. Life in the city of Kyoto could be the unceasing discovery of such visual delight—in its rivers and canals, in the nearby mountains with their ravines and deep gorges, in the rice fields which begin at the city gates, in the teeming life of the markets and pleasure quarters. And for this, if for no other reason, the great city has survived when others have long ago faded away.

Charm, ironically combined with melancholy, colored the vision of men in the Heian capital, and with critical sharpness, they could document the follies of human nature. This may be seen in a set of satirical scroll paintings preserved at Kōzan-ji, a temple once part of Jingo-ji in the mountains west of town. The temple tradition ascribed these famous scrolls to Kakuyū (A.D. 1053-1140), a theologian of the Tendai sect who is known more popularly as Toba Sōjō. This attribution is not certain, for Kōzan-ji was an active center of Buddhist painting for a number of decades, and skilled monk-



craftsmen gathered there in large numbers. Whoever he was, the artist worked rapidly with brush and ink in line alone and caught the characteristic gestures of animals and men with great skill. It is much more likely that he was a monk-painter than the usual picture specialist of the city, for the content of the scrolls seems to have an added dimension of religious meaning, even though scholars are not able to agree entirely as to what it was. Most likely, the artist depicted contemporary social conditions in the guise of frolicking animals and human caricatures. Some portions of the scrolls show animals amusing themselves in games and holding mock religious services. Others show proud and haughty persons arguing, or common folk in crude and violent games. They were painted, most likely, when bitter disputes were breaking out in the city below, destined to rage throughout the last half of the twelfth century; the social and political order which had prevailed for four centuries, centered on the power of the Fujiwaras, cracked and then collapsed. The cultivated folk of the capital, who had been steeped in their moods of exquisite melancholy or boisterous humor, were soon to be consumed in wretchedness and grief.

Located in the foothills of the mountains which form the eastern boundary of Kyoto is Kiyomizudera. From its main hall (*honden*), the entire city can be seen in one sweeping panorama. The viewing pavilion projects dramatically out from the hall over a cliff and deep ravine. The hall was reconstructed in the Edo period, but it is thought to have preserved the shape of the mansion given to the temple at the beginning of the Heian period by the victorious general Sakanoue Tamuramaro, who led an expedition to bring much of eastern Japan under the authority of the Emperor. Buildings skillfully adapted in this way to a difficult site were a special feature of Heian period architecture, a result of influence from the monasteries set in rugged mountains and also of the desire of the aristocracy for picturesque hillside retreats. For over a thousand years, citizens of the city have climbed up to this historic temple, not only for their Buddhist devotions but also for moon viewing in autumn or for the blossoms in the springtime—a simple custom, performed often with a light heart by the high-born and common folk alike, but behind it lies their profound identification with the changing moods of nature, with the faith, the city, and the nation. The longevity of the old capital and the character of its people are rooted in such things as this.



110. INTERIOR OF THE LECTURE HALL • Tōji • Ninth century • Height of Fudō Myō-ō: 173.2 cm. (68.1 in.)

The frightful energies of the "Five Radiant Kings" (Godai Myō-ō) symbolically enhance the effectiveness of the temple's rituals. They are stationed at the west end of the giant image platform, and in their center sits Fudō, "The Immovable One," steadfast in the face of passion and delusion. This group, together with the rest of the twenty-one images on the platform, offers an overwhelming experience of the emotional range of Esoteric Buddhist (Mikkyō) sculpture.



111. MANDALA (detail of center section) • *Late ninth or early tenth century* • *Tōji, Kyoto* • 183.6 × 163 cm. (71.6 × 63.6 in.)

In this detail of nine figures in the central portion of the Taizōkai mandala, the influence of Buddhist painting of India and Central Asia (as filtered through T'ang China) is still very much apparent. The high intensity of the color and the sense of radiant energy shown here carry into the rest of the composition, in which some 321 other figures are arranged with the same sense of geometric precision. This vast pantheon, as indeed all of creation, is considered an emanation of Vairocana, shown in the center with his jeweled ornaments and a halo whose undulating color pattern suggests an unearthly force. From Vairocana's circle radiate four lotus petals pointing in the cardinal directions, each enclosing a seated Buddha. Between them and set off by a three-pronged vajra are petals holding the four great Bodhisattvas, beginning with Fugen in the north-east, Monju in the southeast, Kannon, and then Miroku.

112. SHINTO GODDESS, MATSUO SHRINE • Kyoto • Ninth century • Height: 86.9 cm. (33.8 in.)

Buddhist customs encouraged the Japanese to make icons of their native gods in much the same way that in India, centuries earlier, foreign images had stimulated the making of the first statues of the Buddha. But from the very beginning, the figures of Shinto gods revealed the growing self-consciousness of native traditions in the arts which came to maturity during the Heian period.



113. MALE SHINTO DEITY • MATSUO SHRINE • Kyoto • Ninth century • Height: 89 cm. (35 in.)

Steeped in the atmosphere of mysticism of the early Heian period, the Japanese began for the first time to depict their native gods in human guise. With few exceptions, these images were imbued with qualities different from those of Buddhist icons. They were dressed native style, were carved compactly, usually on a small scale, and given dignity and a stolid presence. The face of this statue is contorted by an expression of great psychic tension—the eyebrows gathered, the chin drawn rigidly.





115. THE SHISHIN-DEN, KYOTO IMPERIAL PLACE

The heart of the palace is the Shishin-den, in which the coronation and other state ceremonies are performed. The enclosing corridors have tiled roofs and lacquered red woodwork, but the Shishin-den itself is built of unpainted timbers and roofed with cypress bark. Despite the grandeur of its scale, its dominant qualities are those of serenity and great simplicity, for the semi-divine status of the Japanese emperor has long been assured among the people, and needs no bombastic affirmation. The only things standing in the broad forecourt of pure white sand are two trees: a mandarin orange and a cherry, traditionally grown at the entrance stairway.

◁ 114. GENERAL VIEW, KYOTO IMPERIAL PALACE

Without fortifications or deep moats, this imperial residence adds to the serenity and peaceful character of the city. There is little that is ostentatious about the Palace, whose courtyards and surrounding parks have a quiet order and naturalness in keeping with Japanese concepts of sovereignty. Although built little more than a century and a half ago, the structures and their arrangement were made on the basis of careful research into the traditions of the ancient Heian Imperial Palace. In the distance looms Mount Hiei, a benevolent and protective form.





117. SEIRYŌ-DEN, KYOTO IMPERIAL PALACE

Directly behind the Shishin-den are the living quarters of the emperor, the Seiryō-den. Its interior is partitioned off into various chambers and possesses a throne for informal audiences. A more compact and orderly structure than the larger Shishin-den, its forecourt of raked gravel is equally severe, ornamented with nothing more than water channels and two clumps of bamboo named after the ancient Chinese kingdoms of Wu and Han.

◁ 116. INTERIOR OF THE SHISHIN-DEN

Beneath the great wooden rafters stands the Imperial Coronation Throne, the Takamikura. The interior spaces of the hall, unbroken by partitions, look directly out into the gleaming sand of the forecourt beyond. Except for the thrones of the emperor and empress, there are no other strictly imperial regalia inside this vast chamber.



118. FROM *THE TALES OF GENJI*, ILLUSTRATED HANDSCROLL • Twelfth century • Height: 22 cm. (8.6 in.)

This is one of the most poignant of the scenes from *The Tale of Genji*. Dressed as a monk holding a rosary, the retired Emperor Suzaku visits his daughter and is accompanied by her husband, Prince Genji (left foreground). The daughter is swept with remorse, for she is to have a child by another man, and vows to enter a nunnery. In this tragic confrontation, the principle figures and chambermaids are given over to melancholy and grief—each in his own manner. The muted harmonies of the color scheme reflect this mood. The high vantage point looking down into the chamber, the essentially abstract patterns of the women's garments and the curtains, the faces shown with a minimum of detail—these are all characteristic of the *Yamato-e* style of painting and the exquisitely refined life of the court.



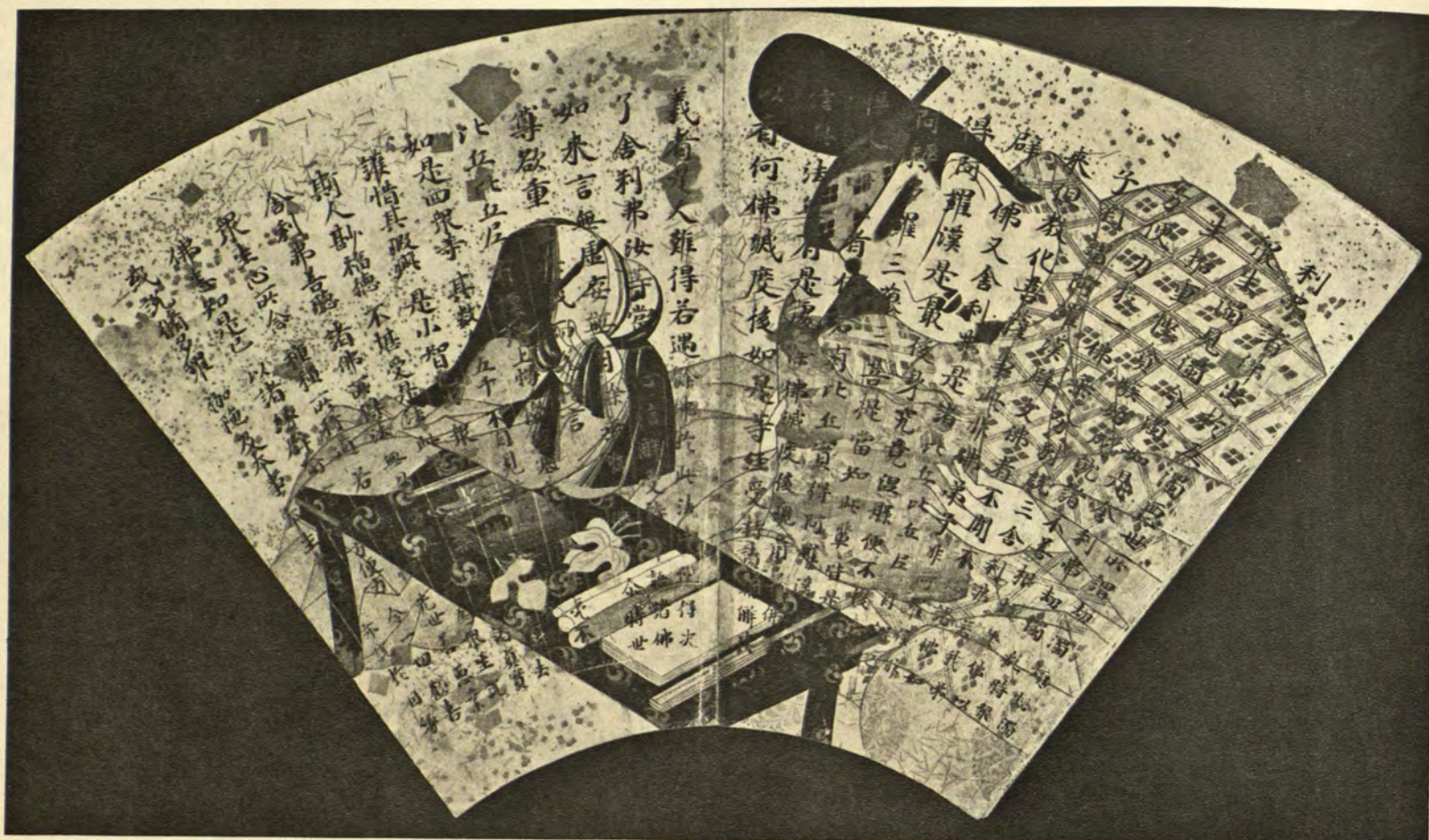
119. FROM THE *SHIGISAN ENGI*, ILLUSTRATED HANDSCROLL • Twelfth century • Height: 31.5 cm. (12.4 in.); length of scroll: 35.6 m. (116.67 ft.)

Depicted here is an exciting incident from the legends of a saintly monk named Myōren, who dwelled in a small temple near Nara on the slopes of Mount Shigi. Through the power of his faith, he was able to send the rice granary of a wealthy man flying through the air on top of his begging bowl. The squire on horseback and the country people are shown in their humorous astonishment as they chase after the miraculous event. Everything in this scroll—people, warehouse, water—is imbued with a strong sense of movement rendered with restless strokes of the brush and with very thin, pale coloring. This is another facet of the *Yamato-e* style, one which stressed dynamic action and a rustic, boisterous mood.

120. THE *BAN DAINAGON EKOTOBA*, ILLUSTRATED HANDSCROLL • Twelfth century • Height: 30.4 cm. (11.9 in.); length of scroll: 26 m. (85.3 ft.)

The scene of the arson (for political reasons) of one of the main gates of the Imperial Palace is the opening episode in this set of scrolls. With consummate skill, the artist painted the crowds of citizens, some attracted by the spectacle, others crying out, others repelled by the heat of the flames—each person's reaction clearly shown through bodily gesture and facial expression.





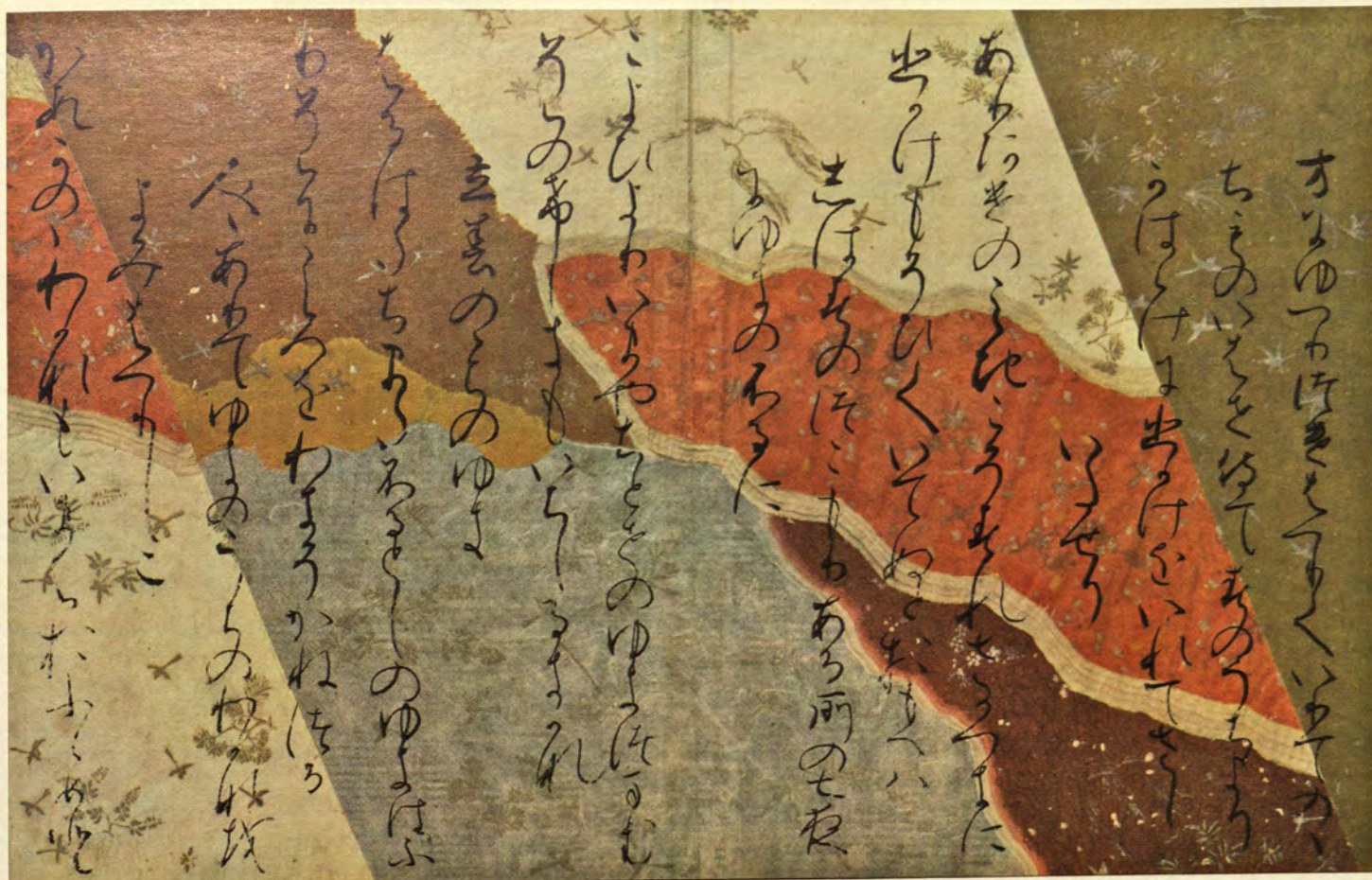
121. TEXT OF THE *LOTUS SUTRA* WRITTEN ON FAN-SHAPED PAPER • Twelfth century • Height: 25.6 cm. (10 in.); width: 49.4 cm. (19.4 in.)

To make a copy of the *Lotus Sutra*, considered one of the holiest of the Buddhist gospels, was an act of great piety among the Heian aristocrats. By copying the text on paper made to decorate fans, the faith was linked more closely with everyday life. The illustrations, moreover, are scenes of court and city life not greatly different in spirit from those of the woodblock prints of the Edo period. Here, a man wearing a court hat is boldly shown chatting with a coquettish girl, and on the paper itself sumptuous bits of gold and silver leaf have been scattered in a random way.



122. AMULET COVERS, SHITENNŌ-JI

Protective amulets were wrapped in rare brocade and ornamented with fittings of gilded silver, delicately inlaid or filigreed. Like the painted fan sutras, they were donated by devout ladies among the Heian aristocracy to Shitennō-ji in Osaka, not far from the capital and one of the oldest and most sacred temples in Japan.



123. A PAGE FROM *THE ANTHOLOGY OF THE THIRTY-SIX POETS*, NISHI HONGAN-JI • Twelfth century • Height: 15.8 cm. (6.2 in.); width: 17.9 cm. (7 in.)

The flowing letters of the Japanese alphabetic script are in themselves an esthetic achievement of a high order, but the design beneath enhances the whole. Ornamented with many kinds of colored paper that were torn and cut and pasted like a collage and then flecked with gold and silver, it is a vivid reminder of the days when men competed with each other in the search for sensuous beauty.

124. LACQUERED TOILETRIES BOX WITH DESIGN OF FLOATING WHEELS • Twelfth century • Length: 22.5 cm. (8.8 in.); width: 30.5 cm. (12 in.); height: 13 cm. (5.1 in.)

Passing along the banks of the Kamo River in Kyoto, one could see wheels of bullock carts set out into the water in order to keep them from drying and warping—a mundane motif here converted into a design of extraordinary beauty. Lacquer paint made of gold dust in two shades—reddish and bluish—sets the wheels and water patterns off against the black background. Mother-of-pearl is inlaid into the rims of every other wheel, and wheel-shaped studs for the tying cord are made of silver.





125. SATIRICAL DRAWING, KŌZAN-JI • Twelfth century •
Height: 30.5 cm. (12 in.)

Four scroll paintings at Kōzan-ji are attributed to the hand of a twelfth century monk popularly known as Toba Sōjō. When seen as humorous drawings, they are of great charm; if interpreted as essays in satire, their interest and importance becomes much deeper. Using only a soft brush to draw a simple black line, the artist caught an amazing variety of gestures and expressions of men and animals in motion. Kōzan-ji was an active center of Buddhist scroll painting and employed many skillful monk-painters, of whom Toba Sōjō was the most famous. This drawing technique, incredibly deft and sure, may well have been a by-product of their training in Buddhist iconography.



126. SATIRICAL DRAWING, KŌZAN-JI • Twelfth century ▷
• Height: 31 cm. (12.2 in.)

The scene of monks and townspeople in the midst of a heated tug-of-war appears in the set of four scrolls. As the capital became increasingly an arena of intrigue and religious and political struggle, the painters of Kōzan-ji may well have been moved to comment in this fashion on the affairs of the city. It is regrettable that these scrolls are occasionally labeled cartoons, for the vision which produced them was a sharp and penetrating thing.



127. KIYOMIZU-DERA

In keeping with its nickname, "the High Hall," the entire city of Kyoto can be seen from the viewing platform.

VII. From Daigo to Uji

■ In the metropolitan area of Kyoto, prosperous and expanding today, many districts are still preserved in which episodes from its twelve centuries of history may be easily recalled. Outstanding among these is the stretch of land south of town from Daigo to Uji, linked by river and road with Nara and the rich Ōmi district around Lake Biwa. There one encounters a number of sites that speak eloquently of the past.

■ DAIGO-JI. Atop a steep mountain southeast of the capital, a Mikkyō-style monastery was built in the 870's by the monk Shōbō. The mountain and temple both were given the name Daigo, a word of Indian origin used to describe the essence of Buddhist teaching, and the prince who was to become the first imperial patron of the temple assumed the same name when he became the Emperor Daigo in 897. With his support and then that of his successors, the emperors Suzaku and Murakami, a more elaborate compound was built at the foot of the mountain on a site easily accessible from the city. At first, the religious movement of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan had burned with the spirit of reform, building its monasteries high in the mountains to escape the distractions of urban life. But as the period of such resoluteness passed and the pioneering spirit slackened, the Shingon sect aimed at establishing this new sanctuary close to the capital city. The five-story pagoda standing today at the foot of Mount Daigo may be seen as a milestone of this religious development. Inside the pagoda is an ancient mandala painted on the wooden walls, but in its color and composition, the intense atmosphere of the earlier Mikkyō arts has been greatly moderated, a reflection of the taste for elegance in the nearby capital, if nothing else. Because of its links with the imperial court and the ranks of the aristocracy, Daigo-ji flourished and grew to be a major force in religious circles; large numbers of monk scholars gathered there and developed their own variations of the Shingon creed. The temple compound as it appears today was greatly affected by the patronage of the supreme military ruler of Japan in the late sixteenth century, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, whose massive stronghold in the Momoyama Castle was close enough to be seen from the temple. In the spring of 1598, not long before his death, Hideyoshi held a banquet for the viewing of cherry blossoms in the temple grounds, a party so lavish and expensive that it has lived in the annals of extravagance. The fact that the sacred grounds were thrown open in this way for a banquet shows the degree to which the Esoteric creeds had been drawn back into the common world; but in spite of this, their profound and mysterious doctrines were usually too difficult for the average layman to understand. Even the theological notion that enlightenment can be obtained here and now through austerities and prayer was too remote a goal for the men of the Heian period, accustomed to peace and the pursuit of comfort. A monk of the Tendai sect, Eshin Sōzu, was quick to notice this popular dissatisfaction and began to preach another doctrine of salvation.

■ THE PURE LAND CREED. Eshin restored to prominence the faith in the "Pure Land" (Jōdō) which had been rather ignored in Esoteric teaching, and he spread with great energy its major tenets: that the boundless love and compassion of Amitābha Buddha extends to all beings; that if a man simply recites the name of this Buddha with a sincere heart, he will be received after death into the Western Paradise, where he will find an atmosphere of such spiritual purity and eloquent teaching that *nirvāna* can be immediately attained. To those who had stood before the darkened universe of Esoterism, filled with frightful mysteries, this offered the vision of a brighter realm. For those who were living in fear because of the prediction that the world would enter its final stage of spiritual disintegration around the year 1052, this path to salvation brought great solace. Two texts written by Eshin became extremely influential, the *Ōjōyo-shū* ("A Collection of Principles Essential for Birth into the Pure Land," published in 985) and the *Jōdo Wasan* ("Poems in Praise of the Pure Land"). Moreover, a large painting was made according to a vision Eshin was said to have had while atop Mount Hiei. It depicted the Amida Raigō, the descent of Amitābha and a large following of Bodhisattvas and musicians in order to receive a man's soul. Such efforts convinced large numbers of people of the reality of the Raigō and the accessibility of the Western Paradise, and the Jōdo creed banished any trace of the grotesque from its main imagery. The painting based on Eshin's vision is kept today on Kōya-san, but was first displayed in Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei. The golden image of Amitābha is in the center surrounded by a number of divine attendants riding on clouds; the Bodhisattva Kannon holds a lotus pedestal on which the soul of a dying man will be taken to Paradise. The proximity to earth is shown by a mountain top with trees and also some water; and the downward movement of the group is suggested by fluttering patterns along the trailing edges of the clouds and scarves. Some of the members of the heavenly

host bear flowers, others join their hands in prayer, but most are playing musical instruments with a sense of fervor and joy. The visionary effect is enhanced by the elegance of the color scheme, with the golden figure of Amitābha in the center, and the delicately tinted bodies and garments of the host interrupted by the passage of transparent white clouds. Such an extraordinary religious icon can only have reflected the deep yearnings of men for the solace of divine grace. Among the ruling class, these feelings were especially strong, for having searched for gratification in this life, they hoped also to find it in the next, and they began building for themselves special private halls for the worship of Amitābha, an *Amida-dō*. In these lavishly adorned chapels, they would sit absorbed in prayers and sermons and the rapture of their vision of blessed rebirth.

■ **THE PHOENIX HALL AT UJI.** From early times, the Uji district has been a favorite resort of people of the capital; located along the river which threads the verdant mountain gorges from Lake Biwa, it is celebrated for its beauty and coolness in the summer. Here, a country villa of the powerful Chancellor Fujiwara Michinaga was converted into a temple by his son Yorimichi, and an *Amida-dō* was built with the unstinting support of the wealthiest family in the land. Known popularly today as the *Hōō-dō*, or "Phoenix Hall," it stands at the edge of a small pond, its airy and colorful forms reflected in the still water. Its ground plan differs from that of the usual *Amida* halls in that it has two side wings extending to the right and left and also a tail-like corridor in the rear; in outline it roughly resembles a bird with outstretched wings. The roofs are built in a variety of shapes, and the entire structure shows a great concern with the essential, creative aspects of the builders' craft. The second story of the wing corridors is too low for passage, and in fact, the wings are present not for utility but for appearances; the building was conceived as a reproduction on earth of the jeweled palace of Amitābha in the Western Paradise, and it closely resembles those in Chinese and Japanese paintings of the theme.

In the center of the hall, seated on a lotus pedestal, is a statue of the deity, almost ten feet high, his face imbued with an expression of compassion and grace. The sculptor was the most accomplished and celebrated man of his generation, Jōchō Busshi. Although Amitābha had long exercised great religious appeal, images of him had not become sufficiently individualized or refined to satisfy the visions of his devotees. It was Jōchō, however, who finally answered this need, and this distinctive type of statue was soon adopted throughout the land. The expression of compassion on the face was not the only characteristic feature of Jōchō's style. A sense of tranquility arose from the equilibrium of the clearly defined masses of the body, and there was also a warmth in the sheer elegance and precision of the carving. For such large figures, Jōchō established rather simple proportions and shallow surface details in order that the statues could be constructed with many small blocks of wood and the labor divided among his assistants, a system rather like an assembly line which was soon widely imitated. Jōchō, who died in 1057, came to be regarded as the founder of this new method of workshop production as well as being the first of a new kind of master sculptor. His atelier, with the encouragement of the Chancellor Yorimichi, also provided the pedestal, halo, and canopies for the Phoenix Hall, carving them with the utmost refinement of craftsmanship; and their gilding and intricate, openwork designs still invoke a visionary atmosphere of light and hope, even today.

High on the walls that enclose the seated Buddha are small carvings in shallow relief of some fifty-two Bodhisattvas and angels placed on clouds. Some of them are to accompany Amitābha when he descends to earth; others are to remain in the sky above. In addition, painted on the doors and wooden walls inside the hall are nine different versions of the Raigō motif, for theologically, those reborn in Paradise are to be divided into nine classes according to the nature of their faith and good works. But regardless of these distinctions, each painting shows equally the welcoming of the souls of the dead and thus offers assurance that all who wish it sincerely may enter Paradise. The saving grace of Amitābha is shown as reaching different types of people, extending even into a mountain hut and across a field of grazing horses. In the painting technique, it is difficult at times to distinguish between passages done in the *Yamato-e* style and those in the traditional Buddhist manner, for the two have been closely harmonized. Just as Jōchō produced a new, classic type of Amitābha image in response to the needs of his time, so in the realm of painting, new requirements were also satisfied: the miracle of divine salvation was placed into the local landscape. (This is yet another manifestation of how the arts of this period took on a strong national flavor.) And with all the skills in the luxury arts concentrated in the capital, the image platform and upper tie beams were adorned with brightly painted designs, mother-of-pearl inlay, and gilded metal fittings. A person entering this chapel, his eyes enthralled by such a display, might well have believed that he had already risen to the Pure Land of Bliss. The channeling of such religious fervor in architecture was not limited to the Chancellor Yorimichi, however. It was the aspiration of almost all wealthy and high-born people of the day.

■ **HŌKAI-JI.** Not far from Uji is the small temple of Hōkai-ji, once the site of a country villa of Hino-no-Sukenari, head of an influential family related to the Fujiwaras. Records indicate that during the Heian period, no fewer than three *Amida* halls were built within these grounds, and one of them is still standing. Its patron lacked the resources and power of Yorimichi, and the architecture is more straightforward than that of the Phoenix Hall, having fewer radical inventions. If only because of the wide eaves and corridors which encircle the hall, it has the simplicity of a private dwelling and is

probably more typical of the Amida halls ordinarily built during the time. The interior has a quiet, tasteful atmosphere, while the statue of Amitābha closely resembles that of Jōchō at Uji, if somewhat less eloquent. The angelic figures high on the walls are painted and not carved, and have a strangely sorrowful air about them. The members of the family may well have preferred the tranquility of their more humble building as they kneeled there at sundown, facing westward and reciting the *nembutsu*, muttering the name of Amitābha over and over. Yet the atmosphere around the capital, overripe with wealth and privilege, did not really encourage a quietly religious way of life. The courtiers tended to display their own wealth and power in the guise of pious building, and thus satisfied their desire for pomp and worldly glory.

■ THE BUILDING OF HŌJŌ-JI. This new pattern of aristocratic patronage had been set by the father of Yorimichi, the Chancellor Michinaga (966-1027), whose thirty years of rule as the virtual dictator of the land marked the climax of the influence of the Fujiwaras. He constructed an immense temple called Hōjō-ji along the banks of the Kamo River on the eastern outskirts of the capital, and entrusted the carving of the cult images to a workshop of which Jōchō became the leading figure. Records and descriptions of the temple are abundant, but unfortunately, all traces of its buildings and statues have disappeared. The first major hall was completed in 1020, the Muryōju-in dedicated to Amitābha, who was represented by nine separate statues, each sixteen feet tall. The fact that this was the first hall completed indicates its importance to Michinaga, and indeed, at his own request, his dying moments were spent there, the *nembutsu* on his lips and the sounds of the chanting of the *Lotus Sutra* in his ears. The *kondō* was completed in 1022, and its imagery belonged to the older iconographic tradition: a statue of Dainichi (Mahāvairocana) over thirty feet tall, flanked by statues of the Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Maitreya, eighteen feet high. Also on the altar platform were the figures of Indra, Brahma, and the Four Guardian Kings. The other main hall was the Godai-dō, completed the same year, and dedicated to the Five Radiant Kings of the Esoteric Buddhist system. The central cult image was Fudō Myō-ō, eighteen feet tall, and it was surrounded by the other four Myō-ō, each sixteen feet high. There had been temple projects on a vast scale like this before, usually supported by the imperial court with the resources of the state, but this one was undertaken by a single courtier. He was, however, one who could accurately describe himself in a poem: "This world, I think, is indeed my world. Like the full moon am I, uncovered by any cloud." And it should be assumed that for all his genuine piety, Michinaga built the Hōjō-ji as the ultimate demonstration of his power and authority. According to the description of this project in the *Eiga Monogatari* ("Tales of Glory," a historical narrative of the day), over a hundred men with the rank of *busshi* were employed on the statuary, and many hundreds of craftsmen labored on the construction of the halls. With such prodigious expenditures of labor and materials, the aristocrats must indeed have expected the richest of spiritual rewards—for such was their way of thinking.

■ THE RETIRED EMPEROR SHIRAKAWA. As the Heian period drew to a close, an old Buddhist custom of a ruler abdicating the throne in order to enter a monastery became increasingly common. Along with the opportunity to concentrate on spiritual discipline, these abdications were also politically inspired, for a Japanese emperor in the guise of a monk had far greater freedom of action than he did when hedged by the ancient rituals and protocol of semi-divine sovereignty. Thus the peculiar institution of the *insei* ("cloister-government") came into prominence, especially when the Emperor Shirakawa abdicated in 1086 and, while giving himself over to meditation and religious activity, nonetheless remained active in the government for over forty years and schemed to suppress the power of the Fujiwaras. Such was his piety, though, that he is recorded in his lifetime as having commissioned Buddhist statues in the following quantities: standing images sixteen feet high: five; seated images eight feet high: 127; life-sized statues: 3,150; those smaller than three feet high: over 2,930. The donation of images in excess of even these numbers became a major tendency at this time, for they would be installed in temples in groups of a hundred or a thousand. Spurred on by the example of the "cloistered emperors," the courtiers competed with each other in the size of their donations, not for the sake of spiritual blessings, but rather to gain divine assistance for worldly goals. The custom reached the point where, today, the records read like fantasies. The same excesses took place with Buddhist painting and the copying of sutras, but sculpture was the most important idiom. Naturally, it was impossible to maintain high esthetic standards in the pursuit of sheer numbers.

The technique of making statues in vast quantities had been perfected by Jōchō, who devised the processes of assembled woodblock sculpture and of mass production, and who also reorganized the sculpture workshops (the *bussho*) into very elaborate corporations. In time, however, these workshops were forced to expand and develop new branches in order to keep up with their commissions.

■ EXPANSION OF THE SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS. To be closer to the site of the greatest building activity, Jōchō moved his atelier from Nara to Kyoto; when he was succeeded by his son Kakujo, the shop was called the Shichijō Bussho, named for its location on Seventh Avenue. The following two generations of sculptors in Jōchō's tradition formed and reformed themselves into a number of other workshops bearing the names of their locations. One group worked at Sanjō (Third Avenue) in Kyoto; another returned to the old workshop in Nara; another set up operation near the corner of Shichijō

and Ōmiya avenues in Kyoto; yet another was near Rokujō (Sixth Avenue). Large numbers of students and craftsmen were active in these shops, and despite the fact that there was an almost insatiable demand for statues, a strong spirit of competition broke out among the ateliers. In Jōchō's time, the status of the master craftsman was at last officially recognized, and the heads of workshops appointed to increasingly high ecclesiastic ranks; but these too became the object of disputes. The style of these workshops was a mere repetition of the classic types established by Jōchō. Satisfied with their role as inheritors of a famous tradition, they had little desire for innovation and followed the well-marked path; as a result, the statuary they produced became increasingly formalized. It was also linked with the general pursuit of outward splendor and elaborateness of the day, and this became a heavy burden artistically for Buddhist sculpture to bear. It is ironical indeed that in this era of feverish enthusiasm for the commissioning of images, as the carving techniques and construction of statues themselves greatly advanced, esthetic values declined markedly. This closely resembles the collapse of the social and political system of the patrons of the workshops, the aristocracy of the Heian capital—self-centered, steeped in excessive luxury, and increasingly out of contact with the realities of national life.

The doctrines of the Pure Land comprised a much easier path to salvation than the austere and complex ones of the Esoteric sects. For the most part, they had a popular character, but in order to develop among the elite classes of the capital, the Jōdō sect took on certain aristocratic traits. As a result, new sub-sects sprang into being in order to take advantage of this chance to preach the creed of the Western Paradise among the masses.

The late Heian period was not one in which the religious spirit soared to great heights. But even though the fears concerning the End of the Law and the deep longings for Paradise in the next life may have been mass illusions, they were ones which inspired exquisitely and elaborately executed works whose remains today give great pleasure. The illusions have largely vanished, but around the temple sites in the southeast suburbs of the capital still grow the gentle, feathery *mosō* bamboo, as though guarding the ancient atmosphere. Carefully tended tea gardens have been added to the area, and here and there are stone Buddhist images along the wayside, set up by villagers in recent centuries. A district like this offers rich insights into the entire, long history of the Heian capital.



128. FIVE-STORY PAGODA, DAIGO-JI • *Tenth century* •
Height: 38.2 m. (118.75 ft.)

Enclosed by pine trees, this handsome structure is somewhat difficult to see or approach. It is similar in form to the pagoda at Hōryū-ji; but where the older monument has scenes from the life of Sākyamuni depicted in dry clay groups on the ground floor, in this one are paintings of mandalas and portraits of the founders of the Shingon sect. The oldest portion of the temple is on top of Mount Daigo in a dramatic setting typical of early Esoteric Buddhism in Japan. The construction of this pagoda and the rest of the compound at the foot of the mountain was an effort to make the sanctuary more accessible to the laymen of the capital city.

129. DETAIL OF WALL PAINTING, INTERIOR OF THE
PAGODA • *Tenth century* • Width: 70 cm. (27.5 in.)

The boards which encase the central mast of the pagoda are painted with many small figures of deities arranged in two mandalas. Although somewhat faded, the original coloring is otherwise well preserved in places. The hard outlines and modeling of the figures with reddish shadows are all traits of an archaic Buddhist style; the radiant halos and those painted with whirling patterns are peculiarities of Esoteric Buddhist symbolism. But one feels here that the fierce energies of early Mikkyō art have weakened. The color relationships are rather tranquil, and applications of cut gold show the tendency toward elegance in Buddhist painting of the mid-Heian period.



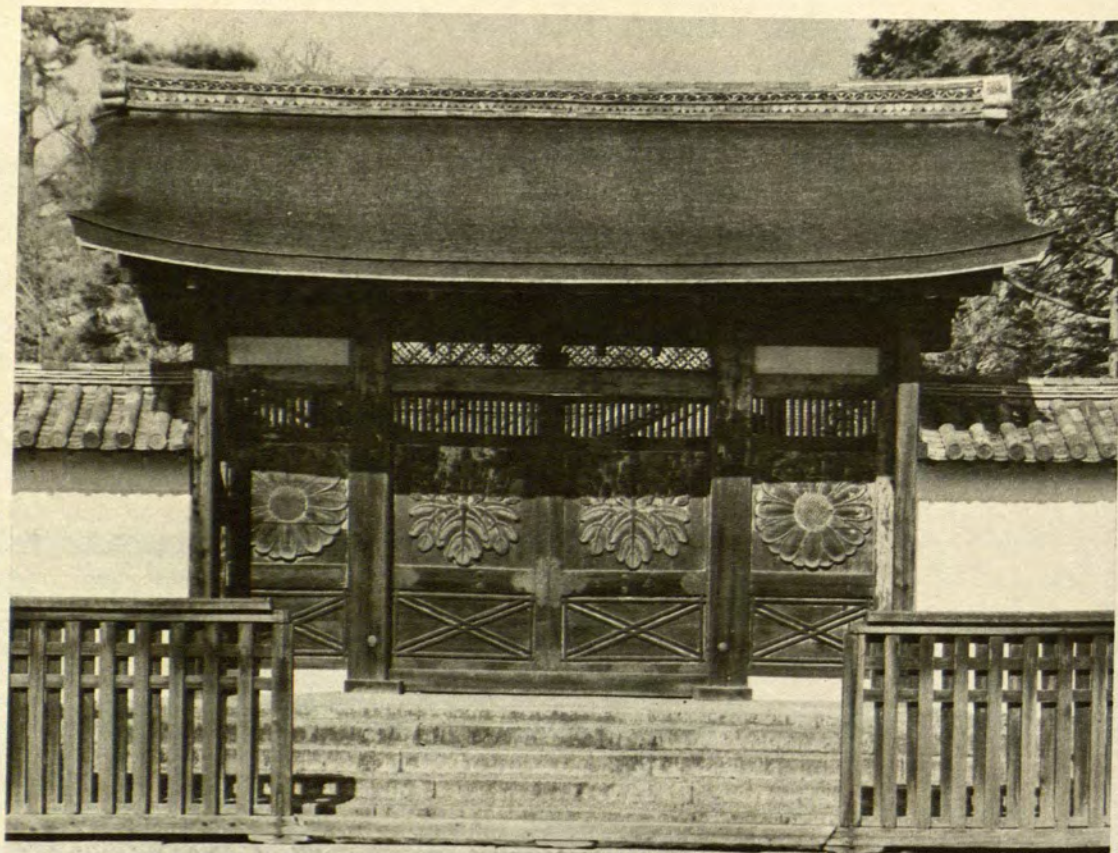


130. GARDEN AND PALATIAL BUILDINGS OF THE SAMBŌ-IN, DAIGO-JI • *Late sixteenth century*

One of the important sub-temples at Daigo-ji, this site has long been used to house the abbot of the monastery and royalty or other persons of high station coming to the temple for their devotions. The current buildings and gardens were constructed in the manner of an aristocratic residence with the patronage of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, military ruler of Japan from 1584 to 1598. Together with the painted screens inside, the Sambō-in is one of the most exquisite examples in later Japanese architecture of the fusion of garden, building, and paintings into a single esthetic unit.

131. THE KARAMON OF THE SAMBŌ-IN, DAIGO-JI • *Late sixteenth century*

This *karamon* ("Chinese gate"), ceremonial entrance to the garden of the Sambō-in, was erected as part of the preparations for the lavish banquet at cherry blossom time given by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1598. It is the classical example of the so-called *hira karamon*-type gate, its roof of cypress-bark shingles having a gable at each end and a simple, unbroken frontal surface. The central doors are carved with bold designs of paulownia blossoms in low relief, Hideyoshi's emblem; the two side walls bear chrysanthemum flowers with twelve petals. In contrast with the delicacy of the gate itself, the floral motifs are assertively bold.





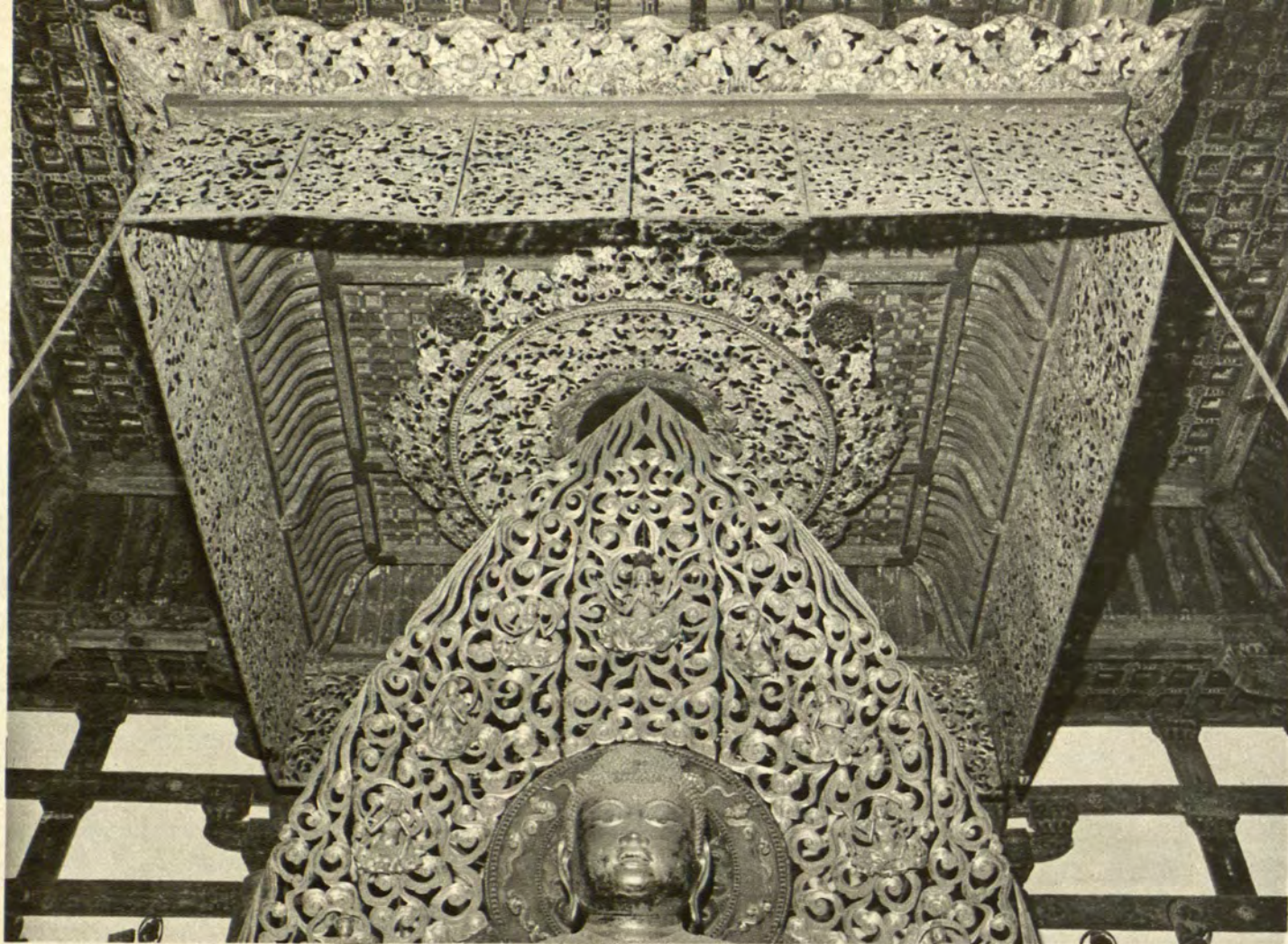
132. THE UJI RIVER GORGE AND THE BYÖDŌ-IN

The swift Uji River threads its way through the mountains, its waters fed by the overflow of Lake Biwa. Its cool and verdant banks have long attracted people of the old capital during the heat of summer. In the foreground is the Byōdō-in, where a country villa of the Fujiwara chancellors was converted into a temple in the eleventh century; its Phoenix Hall, seen from the rear, stands at the edge of a small pond once given the shape of the Sanskrit letter A. On the opposite bank is the chief Shinto shrine of the area, the Uji Kami Jinja, and the Hōshō-ji (Hashi-dera).

133. PHOENIX HALL OF THE BYÖDŌ-IN, UJI • *Eleventh century* • Central hall: 33.8×16.3 m. (110.8×53.3 ft.)

The Phoenix Hall is a model of the heavenly palace of Amitābha as it had long been envisaged by Chinese and Japanese Buddhists, and inside is a large gilded statue of the Lord of the Western Paradise. The color of the exterior woodwork is a faded cinnabar, set off by the brilliant white of the plaster; the eaves of the gray tile roofs are turned gently upward, and the ranks of slender columns seem to bear their load with ease—the ensemble reflected in the shimmering waters of the pond before it. As if such visionary beauty were not yet enough to set this structure apart from the profane world, the water of the pond entirely surrounds it.





134. CANOPY, PHOENIX HALL • *Eleventh century • Canopy: 4.36 × 4.87 m. (14.8 × 15.95 ft.); diameter of circular element: 2.94 m. (9.68 ft.)*

Suspended over the head of the main cult image of Amitābha is a gilded canopy of openwork wooden panels carved with floral patterns. Part of the original furnishings of the hall, these forms are permeated with the artificial, intensely visionary atmosphere of the Pure Land creed.



135–136. ANGELIC MUSICIANS, PHOENIX HALL • *Eleventh century • Average height: 50 cm. (19.6 in.)*

Fifty-two separate wooden figures are placed high on the walls which enclose the statue of Amitābha—musicians, dancers, Bodhisattvas, and even monks. Each stands on a soaring cloud and was originally painted and ornamented with cut-gold patterns. Averaging less than two feet in height, the figures are pervaded by a spirit of lyricism and unworldly beauty appropriate indeed to the “Paradise of Limitless Bliss.”

137. AMITĀBHA BUDDHA • *Phoenix Hall • Eleventh century • Height: 2.84 m. (9.31 ft.)*

Superlatives are concentrated in this statue: the patronage of the Fujiwaras at the apogee of their wealth and power, the skills of the most celebrated sculptor of the age, Jōchō Busshi. The result, within the limitations of a cult image, is one of the most subtle and exquisite achievements of the Heian period. The wide lap enhances the feeling of stability in the figure; the chest is relatively flat and its sense of volume restrained. The garment folds are shallow and carved with crispness and semi-geometric simplicity. The eyes of the Buddha seem to look down upon the devotee, and the facial expression is suffused with serenity and compassion.





138. DETAIL FROM PAINTED DOOR, PHOENIX HALL •
Eleventh century

Nine separate versions of the descent of Amitābha and his attendants to receive the souls of the dying were painted on the interior wooden walls of the Phoenix Hall and also on the inner faces of the doors. Scenes of local folk customs and landscape, such as this tiny detail of horses grazing along the banks of a stream, were placed along the sides and bottom edges of the complex compositions. The subordinate sections were painted in the *Yamato-e* style, whereas the deities themselves were done in the more traditional Buddhist manner. The two styles nonetheless harmonize with each other, and it was very much in the spirit of the age to combine religious and secular imagery this way.

139. DETAIL FROM PAINTED DOOR, PHOENIX HALL • ▷
Eleventh century

Amitābha and his attendants were painted in the traditional Buddhist style formed in China during the T'ang period out of local and Indian elements and adopted throughout East Asia. The contour lines in red are rather hard and unvaried, the faces and bodies highly idealized; the color scheme is unrealistic and sumptuous in spirit. Nonetheless, these figures are imbued with a greater softness and lyricism than those, say, of the frescoes of the *kondō* of Hōryū-ji, reflecting the passage of the centuries and gradual change in religious attitudes.





◁ 140. INTERIOR OF THE
AMIDA-DŌ, HŌKAI-
JI • Twelfth century •
Height: 2.84 m. (9.13 ft.)

This statue of Amitābha has a tranquility and quiescence fitting the modesty of the hall. A classic example of the type of Amitābha perfected by Jōchō, it sits on an elaborate lotus pedestal symbolic of the nine divisions of the Western Paradise; the hand gesture is the one peculiar to Amitābha when in a state of deep meditation.

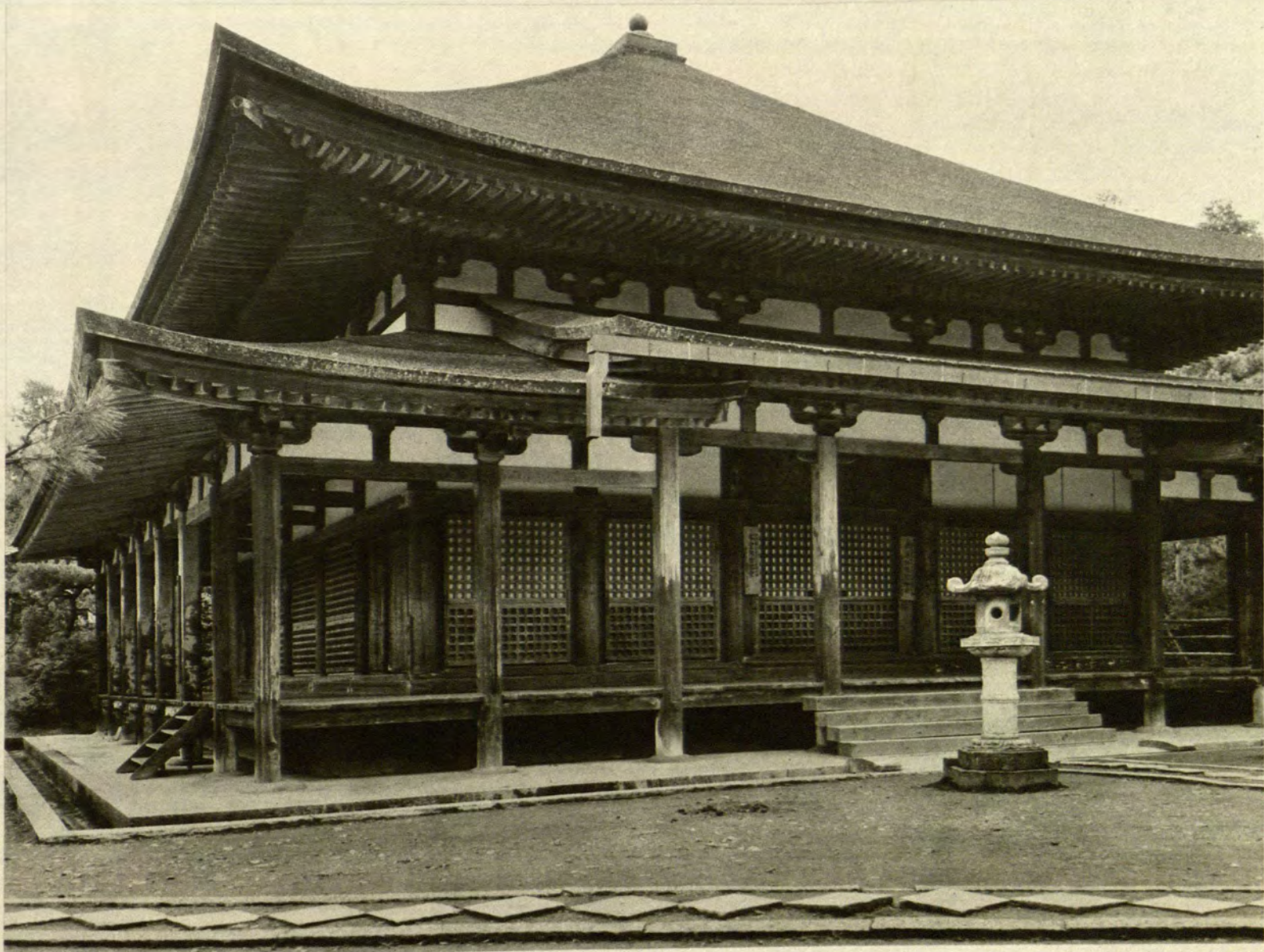


141 FLYING ANGEL • WALL PAINTING, HŌKAI-JI •
Twelfth century

High on the interior wall of the *Amida-dō* of Hōkai-ji are painted flying angels. The rather broad, relaxed manner of working, with great variation in the lines, is the result of a new wave of artistic influence coming from Sung China.

142. AMIDA-DŌ, HŌKAI-JI • Twelfth century

This hall dedicated to Amitābha was part of a large, aristocratic country estate. Similar in function to the Phoenix Hall of the Byōdō-in less than two miles away, it is much more modest in structure. The corridor running around all four sides and the cypress-bark roof give it a relaxed air, yet the curving of the eaves adds a touch of refinement and delicacy.





143. BAMBOO GROVES AND TEA GARDENS NEAR UJI

VIII. Provincial Centers:

Itsukushima and Hiraizumi

■ The hold of the Fujiwaras over the economic and political life of the country was gradually broken during the period of the cloister governments, and their position was contested by military families who had once been their subordinates. For a while the confederation of forces led by the Taira clan gained supremacy over their chief rivals, the Minamoto, and energetically took up the reins of real political authority. The Taira clan, who are often referred to as "the Heike," were established with great pomp at the center of life in the capital and steeped themselves deeply in its atmosphere of religious and poetic sentiment. This luxurious way of life had great appeal also for influential families in the provinces, who prided themselves on emulating the culture of the great metropolis, just as governors sent out from the capital would console themselves by bringing along the latest fashions of dress, devotion, and architecture. This process of diffusion reached many places, but its most celebrated relics are at Itsukushima, near Hiroshima in western Japan, and at Hiraizumi in the northeast part of Honshū.

■ ITSUKUSHIMA. Unique in its beauty, as though floating on the waters of the Inland Sea, the current Shinto Shrine of Itsukushima was conceived at the time the Taira clan began their rise to power. The patron was the warrior who led his family to supremacy, the bold and impetuous Taira-no-Kiyomori, who was sent from Kyoto in 1146 as governor of this region, then called the Province of Aki. He offered devotions at what was then a small but ancient shrine erected over the off-shore waters of a tiny island in Hiroshima Bay. Struck with its air of sanctity and natural beauty, he chose it as the tutelary shrine of his family, and as his power increased, conceived the extraordinary plan of the buildings which stand there today. Kiyomori also schemed the reopening of trade and commerce on a large scale with south China, ruled by the remnants of the Sung Dynasty, and to develop Hiroshima and other ports on the Inland Sea for this purpose. He naturally felt great hesitation about so hazardous and expensive an operation, but just as the Fujiwaras had made the Kasuga Taisha into their family shrine, he resolved to have a suitable deity to protect the enterprises of the Heike. Thus, when Kiyomori's daughter became pregnant with the heir-apparent to the throne, she came to the Itsukushima Shrine to pray; and all members of the family, and their vassals as well, must have come many times for their devotions.

Kiyomori built the shrine with the same audacity he used in his military and political affairs. It was not in his character to be content with the usual custom among the aristocracy of building a hall dedicated to Amitābha and praying fervently for rebirth in the Western Paradise, so he erected a great shrine comparable to an *Amida-dō* and prayed to the sea for worldly success. Indeed, in the concept of architectural beauty, the closest parallel to the Itsukushima Shrine is the Phoenix Hall at Uji. Just as many of the Amida halls, faithful to the descriptions of Paradise in the sutras, were built beside small ponds which reflected the beauty of the structure, Kiyomori substituted the ocean for a pond and took advantage of the novel effects of the rise and fall of the tides. In this change to a more dynamic, moving kind of beauty, the sensibilities of a new era were coming into play. The shrine buildings were connected by long corridors of the sort found in the Imperial Palace and great mansions of the capital, and even garden pavilions and the like were adopted by Kiyomori's architects for the Itsukushima Shrine. The techniques of building in a dramatic and even perilous setting had, of course, been developed in the mountain temples and rustic villas of the period. Unique, however, was the large scale of the Itsukushima Shrine and its consummate beauty, created by a synthesis of many building and ornamental techniques. It was indeed a dream-like conception, but the pragmatic realism of a military man translated the dream into concrete substance.

Kiyomori not only built a splendid shrine, he also attempted to transplant the courtly arts of the capital there. From his time to the present, the shrine has maintained traditional forms of dance and music along with a number of fine *bugaku* masks from Kyoto, as well as other costumes and instruments. *Bugaku*, which literally means dance and music, had been transmitted to Japan in the Nara period from T'ang China, and was made up of dance forms from courts and temples throughout East Asia, India, the oasis cities of Central Asia, and the Indies (Java, Sumatra, Malaya, and Champa). It had many elements in common with the *gigaku* dance, which was slightly older. In the Heian period,

bugaku was greatly refined and some of its gaucheries weeded out; the children of the aristocracy were given training in one or another of its dances as part of their cultural education. Because it was frequently performed in secular settings, its instrumental music and dance forms could develop freely, and the wooden masks also increased in subtlety and refinement. The old sanctuaries of Nara have *bugaku* masks of this period—the Kasuga Shrine, the Tamukeyama Shrine (at Tōdai-ji), and Hōryū-ji—but those of Itsukushima are by far the finest, for only the best of things were brought here from the capital.

The shrine dances are still performed in a solemn, liturgical way on the stage which projects out over the water. Between the brilliant sky above and the broad, blue plane of the sea, this form of devotion invokes the gods of the Shinto pantheon in a distinctive way. In contrast to scenes of the Amida Raigō, in which exquisite music is shown descending from heaven to earth, here the music of earth rises into the realm of the gods. Salvation through faith and the divine grace of Amitābha is contrasted to this emphasis on the works of man himself, a resoluteness which reflects the spirit of the warrior class. In later centuries, the Itsukushima Shrine came to be worshiped as the tutelary shrine of music itself, and even today, many other idioms in addition to *bugaku* are performed there, including the Nō dance-drama which became a major art form in the early fifteenth century. The seeds of the *bugaku* which the Tairas transplanted from the capital continued thus to bear fruit. But beyond this, there are other relics at the shrine which call to mind the extravagant dreams of the Heike.

One of these is a set of Buddhist scrolls of unequalled richness which they gave to the shrine. Itsukushima was a Shinto sanctuary, to be sure, but the two creeds were closely intertwined during this time and their pantheons correlated—one of the deities of Itsukushima was considered a manifestation of the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara. Moreover, fears concerning the End of the Law had continued unabated, along with the great stimulus which this notion brought to the copying of texts. Throughout the twelfth century, great energy and funds were expended in copying the *Lotus Sutra* on paper or more permanent materials—on tiles, stones, or engraved bronze plates—and burying these in the earth for the use of later generations. In some districts, images and even ritual implements were buried with the texts in special depositories called sutra mounds. The set of scrolls donated by the Heike contain calligraphy which perhaps is not of the highest quality, but the design and ornament were carried out in a manner unparalleled by anything in the past. Each scroll is different, and even on the reverse of the paper (itself of the thinnest, finest quality), flakes of silver and gold were deftly applied. The color of the characters used in the text was richly varied, and at the opening of each scroll plate, was affixed a painting illustrating its religious content. The name of the text, engraved on a silver plate, was affixed on the outside, while the ends of the rollers were made of crystal covered with fine, openwork gilt-bronze patterns. The scrolls were placed in cases made of darkened bronze ornamented with dragons and clouds of gold and silver. In the records of this period are frequent references to the making of sutras whose extravagant beauty astonished those who saw them, but it is hard to imagine anything surpassing these donated by the Tairas; certainly there is nothing among the large number of scrolls preserved today. To be sure, this was a period in which esthetic sensibilities were being lowered; ornament alone became weak and inelegant when applied with excess; but in the Heike scrolls, the full resources of traditional design techniques were marshaled in the same way that building techniques had been exploited for the shrine itself. These scrolls were not buried in the earth for use in the distant future but were offered to the family deity, showing thus both the deep faith of the Heike in the Itsukushima Shrine and also their concern with the world of the here and now, even while pursuing a vision of unearthly beauty.

The shrine preserves quantities of fancy military equipment—armor, helmets, and swords—given during the ascendancy of the Heike by their commanders praying for victory in battle, or offered in gratitude after a successful campaign. As the warrior class (the samurai) gained in influence, its regalia naturally became more ornate. This being a period in which luxury and color permeated the lives of the elite, the warriors took great interest in the appearance as well as the utility of their arms. The equipment of the Heike is more consummately elegant than that even of the Kamakura period, when the military class came completely into its own, politically and culturally, for the estheticism of the Heian age was retained despite the needs for strength and dependability. The shrine has kept for centuries the armor of majestic dark blue said to have been given by Taira-no-Shigemori, Kiyomori's favorite son, in which the color is not especially gaudy but is striking in the tasteful variations of a single hue; there is beauty moreover in the sheer precision by which the complex form was assembled. This custom of donating military equipment began at the Itsukushima Shrine but later was practiced by samurai at Ōsanjima in the Seto Inland Sea, at the Kasuga Shrine in Nara, and at other shrines. It is extremely interesting to see these new forms of devotion of the warrior class replacing those of the aristocracy. Thus it was that Itsukushima became an important center of activity in art and building in the Heian period. In much the same way, at the temple of Fuki-ji in Ōita Prefecture, Kyūshū, the remains of an exquisite wall painting of the Paradise of Amitābha also show strongly the influence of the capital. If one looks for them, there are many other traces of the arts of the Heian-kyō in the remote provinces.

■ **HIRAIZUMI.** The customs of the capital city were transplanted to the far northeast as well. From very early in the Heian period, military expeditions had been dispatched to drive ever northward on Honshū Island the people referred to as Emishi, ancestors of the present-day Ainu, who differed ethnically and culturally from the Yamato race. After the pacification of these ferocious tribesmen, troops were stationed to guard the northern quarter of the island, and these became the nucleus of the dominant forces of that area. A branch of the Fujiwaras was established there, and as they grew in power a small version of Kyoto was developed at Hiraizumi, for even in these remote regions, people yearned greatly for the life of the capital. It had long been said that culture stopped at the Nakoso Barrier, the road checkpoint along the Pacific Ocean some 115 miles north of modern Tokyo. But not far from there, at Shiramizu, was such an elegant *Amida-dō* that one might have thought himself in the suburbs of Kyoto itself when he came upon it. Inside, the trinity of Amitābha and two Bodhisattvas were also done in the full style of the metropolis. The hall had been pledged by the wife of a Taira baron for the benefit of his soul after his death, she having been the daughter of Fujiwara Hidehira, descendant of the members of his clan who had set up a virtually independent state farther to the north. Despite its remote location, this small hall at Shiramizu does not have the slightest provincial flavor, for the northern Fujiwara had abundant wealth and could well afford the finest flowers of the arts of the Heian-kyō.

The Fujiwaras in the northern provinces began to vaunt their expanding power after the so-called Three Years' War (1086-1087), when they insured their full control of the provinces of Mutsu and Dewa and the large quantities of placer gold found in rivers there. With such wealth and large numbers of disciplined warriors, they became a major factor in the two-way struggle for national supremacy between the Taira and Minamoto and were deeply involved in affairs at the capital. Hiraizumi was their stronghold, and it was patterned after Kyoto—its streets laid out in the same grid system, and even the site itself selected because it resembled that of the Heian-kyō. Its greatest temple was Mōtsu-ji, in ruins today; originally it had over forty halls and pagodas in its compound. One of these was the Muryōkō-in ("Hall of Limitless Light"), whose foundation stones still stand by a pond, and from these it had been deduced that the hall closely resembled the layout of the Phoenix Hall at Uji, although its scale was much larger. Another sanctuary, Chūson-ji, was built as a memorial and consolation to the souls of men lost in the struggles to pacify these provinces, and it too once had over forty halls and pagodas. But in 1189, because the northern Fujiwara had given help to the Taira, a huge army led by Minamoto-no-Yoritomo besieged Hiraizumi and put it to the torch. The only major building to survive the holocaust was the Hall of Amitābha of Chūson-ji, called the Konjiki-dō ("Hall of Golden Hue"). Although a very small building, it served in part as the actual tomb of the three most powerful members of the local Fujiwara family, for their embalmed bodies were buried beneath the image platform.

The Konjiki-dō was erected by Fujiwara Kiyohira in 1124, and though it does not differ much in size from the Shiramizu *Amida-dō*, in ornamentation it is as lavish as a jewel box. The interior of the Konjiki-dō is decorated with inlaid gilded metal fittings, mother-of-pearl, and painted lacquer; elsewhere in the interior, and on parts of the outside, gold leaf had been applied over lacquer. Probably the interior of the Phoenix Hall at Uji had the same kind of showy brilliance, but because it was near the metropolis, most of its fittings and inlay have been defaced by excursionists and almost all lost. The Konjiki-dō has had far fewer visitors, so its original internal decor is almost completely preserved; it is ironical, however, that the forms once prevalent in the capital can best be recalled in a building hundreds of miles to the northeast. Kiyohira's motives for constructing this kind of hall were based, of course, on the doctrines of the Pure Land which had spread throughout Japan at this time, stimulating the desire to immerse oneself in the rapture of Paradise as it could be imagined or recreated on earth. Kiyohira also planned from the very beginning to make the Konjiki-dō his own final resting place after death, which indicates his unusually strong devotion to the Jōdo creed. The Buddhist statues on the image platform, with the Amitābha Trinity in the center, are all rather small (none is over two feet high), for they too were part of the same original plan. In fact, three complete sets of images, almost identical in form, are installed on three daises, for as the body of Kiyohira was placed under the central dais, those of his son Motohira and his grandson Hidehira were buried under the left and right platforms, respectively. In their similarities, the statues show how strongly the arts had been formalized at this time, but when they are examined closely, slight differences in feeling and expression can be detected.

Most noteworthy among the elegant fittings of the interior of the hall are those made of gilt bronze. Discs called *keman* (flower pendants) were hung from the edges of the overhead framework of the image platform. Their designs feature fabulous bird-women of Indian mythology, which were shown amid filigree floral patterns, their charmingly feminine forms built up in a delicate relief. Similar in style are thin bronze panels showing peonies and peacocks in low relief attached to the walls enclosing the burial chambers beneath the image platforms. Metal was used extensively in this way for decoration, but the craftsmen of the period averted any feeling of a cold, hard, or heavy substance. Also, mirrors were cast in forms far different from the grave and dignified ones in the T'ang Chinese manner hitherto in vogue. Thin and light, their ornament in delicate low relief, they are designated *wagyō* (Japanese mirrors), and like the *keman* and panel plaques, have the qualities of softness and warmth even though wrought of cold bronze. Also preserved at Chūson-ji are tables, frames for holding chimes,

